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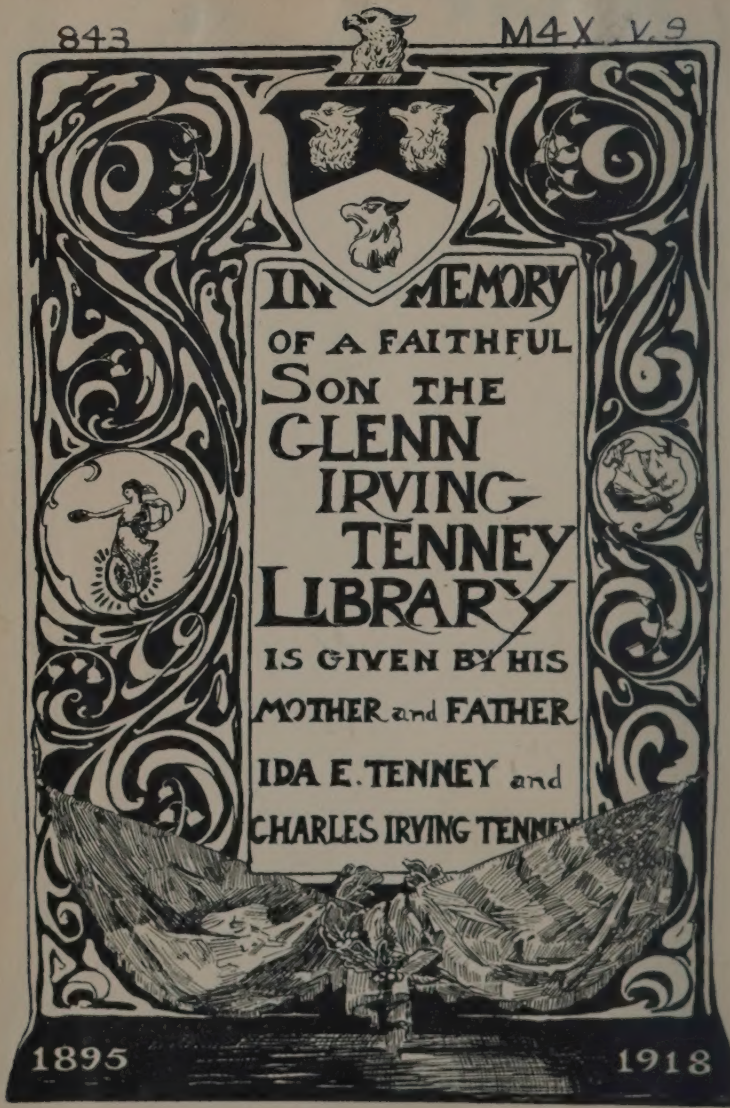
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GUY DE MAUPASSANT

SUR L'EAU

And Other Stories

Privately Printed

"It winds along, pursuing its course unperceived amid the calm, lonely, and magnificent country, and looks like a peaceful lake."

—Sur L'Eau, p. 75.

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GUY DE MAUPASSANT

SUR L'EAU

The Magic Couch

And Other Stories

Translated by
ALBERT M. C. McMASTER, B.A.
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MME. QUESADA and Others

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SUR L'EAU

OR AFLOAT

This Diary contains no story and no very thrilling adventure. While cruising about on the coasts of the Mediterranean last spring, I amused myself by writing down every day what I saw and what I thought.

I saw but the water, the sun, clouds, and rocks —I can tell of naught else—and my thoughts were mere nothings, such as are suggested by the rocking of the waves, lulling and bearing one along.

SUR L'EAU

CHAPTER I

April 6th.

I WAS sound asleep, when my skipper Bernard awoke me by throwing sand at my window. I opened it, and on my face, on my chest, I felt the cold, delicious breath of the night. The sky was a clear blue-gray, and alive with the quivering fire of the stars.

The sailor, standing at the foot of the wall, said:

"Fine weather, sir."

"What wind?"

"Off shore."

"Very well, I'm coming."

Half an hour later I was hurrying down to the shore. The horizon was pale with the first rays of dawn, and I saw in the distance behind the Bay des Anges the lights at Nice, and still farther on the revolving lighthouse at Villefranche.

In front of me Antibes was dimly visible through the lifting darkness, with its two towers rising above the cone-shaped town, surrounded by the old walls built by Vauban.

In the streets were a few dogs and a few men, workmen starting off to their daily labor. In the port nothing but the gentle rocking of the boats at the side of the quay and the soft plashing of the scarcely moving water could be heard; or at times

the sound of the straining of a cable or of a boat grazing against the hull of a vessel. The boats, the flagstones, the sea itself seemed asleep under the gold-spangled firmament, and under the eye of a small lighthouse which, standing out at the end of the jetty, kept watch over its little harbor.

Beyond, in front of Ardouin's building yard, I saw a glimmer, I felt a stir, I heard voices. They were expecting me. The *Bel-Ami* was ready to start.

I went down into the cabin, lighted up by a couple of candles hanging and swinging like two compasses, at the foot of the sofas which at night were used as beds. I donned the leathern sailor's jacket, put on a warm cap, and returned on deck. Already the hawsers had been cast off, and the two men hauling in the cable had brought the anchor apeak. Then they hoisted the big sail, which went up slowly to the monotonous groan of blocks and rigging. It rose wide and wan in the darkness of the night, quivering in the breath of the wind, hiding from us both sky and stars.

The breeze was coming dry and cold from the invisible mountain that one felt to be still laden with snow. It came very faint, as though hardly awake, undecided and intermittent.

Then the men shipped the anchor, I seized the helm, and the boat, like a big ghost, glided through the still waters. In order to get out of the port, we had to tack between the sleeping tartans and schooners. We went gently from one quay to another, dragging after us our little short, round dingey, which followed us as a cygnet, just hatched from its shell, follows the parent swan.

As soon as we reached the channel between the jetty and the square fort, the yacht became livelier, quickened its pace, and seemed more alert, as though a joyous feeling had taken possession of her. She danced over the countless short waves—moving furrows of a boundless plain. Leaving the dead waters of the harbor, she now felt under her the living sea.

There was no swell, and I directed our course between the walls of the town and the buoy called *Cinq-cents francs,* that marks the deeper channel; then, catching the breeze astern, I made sail to double the headland.

The day was breaking, the stars were disappearing, for the last time the Villefranche lighthouse closed its revolving eye, and I saw strange roseate glimmers in the distant sky, above the still invisible Nice, the heights of the Alpine glaciers lighted up by the early dawn. I gave the helm over to Bernard, and watched the rising sun. The freshened breeze sent us skimming over the quivering, violet-tinted waters. A bell clanged, throwing to the wind the three rapid strokes of the Angelus. How is it that the sound of bells seems livelier in the early dawn, and duller at nightfall? I like that chill and keen hour of morn, when man still sleeps and all nature is awakening. The air is full of mysterious thrills unknown to belated risers. I inhale, I drink it; I see the rebirth of life, the material life of the world; the life that runs through all the planets, the secret of which is our eternal problem.

Raymond said:

"We shall soon have the wind from the east."

Bernard replied:

"More likely from the west."

The skipper Bernard is lean and lithe, remarkably clean, careful and prudent. Bearded up to his eyes, he has a frank look and a kindly voice. He is devoted and trusty. But everything makes him anxious at sea; a sudden swell that foretells a breeze out in the open, a long cloud over the Esterel Mountains announcing a *mistral* to westward, even a rising barometer, for that may indicate a squall from the east. Moreover, a capital sailor, he exercises a constant supervision and carries cleanliness to such an extent as to rub up the brasses the moment a drop of water touches them.

His brother-in-law, Raymond, is a strong fellow, swarthy and mustached, indefatigable and bold, as loyal and devoted as the other, but less variable and nervous, more calm, more resigned to the surprises and treachery of the sea. Bernard, Raymond and the barometer are sometimes in contradiction with each other, and perform an amusing comedy with three personages, of which one, the best informed, is dumb.

"Dash it, sir, we're sailing well," said Bernard.

We had, it was true, passed through the Gulf of La Salis, cleared La Garoupe, and were approaching Cape Gros, a flat, low rock stretching out on a level with the water.

Now, the whole Alpine mountain range appeared, a monster wave threatening the sea, a granite wave capped with snow, where each pointed tip looks like a dash of spray motionless and frozen. And the sun rises behind this ice, shedding over it the light of its molten silver rays.

Then, directly after, as we round the Antibes

headland, we discover the Lerins Isles, and farther off behind them the tortuous outline of the Esterel. The Esterel is the stage scenery of Cannes, a lovely keepsake kind of mountain of faintest blue, elegantly outlined in a coquettish and yet artistic style, washed in water colors on a theatrical sky by a good-natured Creator for the express purpose of serving as model for amateur landscape painters.

With each hour of the day, the Esterel changes its aspect, and charms the gaze of the upper ten.

In the morning the chain of mountains, correctly and clearly cut out, is sharply delineated on a blue sky; a tender and pure blue, the ideal blue of a southern shore. But in the evening the wooded sides of the slopes darken and become a black patch on a fiery sky, on a sky incredibly red and dramatic. Never have I seen elsewhere such fairylike sunsets, such conflagrations of the whole horizon, such an effulgence of clouds, such a clever and superb arrangement, such a daily renewal of extravagant and magnificent effects which call forth admiration, but would raise a smile were they painted by men.

The Lerins Isles, which, to the east, close the Gulf of Cannes and separate it from the Gulf of Juan, look themselves like two operatic islands placed there for the satisfaction and delight of invalids and winter sojourners.

Seen from the open sea, where we now are, they resemble two dark-green gardens growing in the water. Out at sea, at the extreme end of Saint-Honorat, stands a romantic ruin, its walls rising out of the waves, like one of Walter Scott's castles, ever beaten by the surf, and in which, in former days, the monks defended themselves against the

Saracens; for Saint-Honorat always belonged to monks, except during the Revolution. At that period the island was purchased by an actress of the Comédie-Française.

Stronghold, militant monks, now toned down into the fattest of smilingly begging Trappists, pretty actress, come thither, no doubt, to conceal her love affairs in the dense thickets and pines of this rock-belted islet—all, down to the very names, "Lerins, Saint-Honorat, Sainte-Marguerite," fit for Florian's fables, all is pleasing, coquettish, romantic, poetic, and rather insipid on the delightful shores of Cannes.

To correspond with the antique manor, embattled, slender and erect, which looks toward the open sea at the extremity of Saint-Honorat, Sainte-Marguerite is terminated on the land side by the celebrated fortress in which the Man in the Iron Mask and Bazaine were confined. A channel about a mile long stretches out between the headland of the Croisette and the fortress, which has the aspect of an old squat house, devoid of anything imposing or majestic. It seems to crouch down, dull and crafty, a real trap for prisoners.

I can now see the three gulfs. In front, beyond the islands, lies that of Cannes; nearer, the Gulf of Juan, and behind the Bay des Anges, overtopped by the Alps and the snowy heights. Farther off, the coasts can be seen far beyond the Italian frontier, and with my glasses I can sight at the end of a promontory the white houses of Bordighera.

And everywhere, all along the endless coast, the towns by the seashore, the villages perched up on high on the mountainside, the innumerable villas

dotted about in the greenery, all look like white eggs laid on the sands, on the rocks, among the pine forests by gigantic birds that have come in the night from the snowlands far above.

More villas on the Cape of Antibes, a long tongue of land, a wonderful garden thrown out between the seas, blooming with the most lovely flowers of Europe, and at the extreme point Eileen Rock, a charming and whimsical residence that attracts visitors from Cannes and Nice.

The breeze has dropped, the yacht hardly makes any progress. After the land wind that lasts all night, we are waiting and hoping for a sea breeze, which will be most welcome, wherever it may blow from.

Bernard still believes in a west wind, Raymond in an east one, and the barometer remains motionless at a little above 76.

The sun, now radiant, overspreads the earth, making the walls of the houses gleam from afar like scattered snow, and sheds over the sea a light varnish of luminous blue.

Little by little, taking advantage of the faintest breath, of those caresses of the air which one can hardly feel on the skin, but which, nevertheless, drive sensitive, well-trimmed yachts through the still waters, we sail beyond the last point of the headland, and the whole Gulf of Juan, with the squadron in the centre of it, lies before us.

From afar, the ironclads look like rocks, islets, and reefs covered with dead trees. The smoke of a train runs along the shore between Cannes and Juan-les-Pins, which will perhaps become later on the prettiest place on the whole coast.

Three tartans, with their lateen sails, one red, and the other two white, are detained in the channel between Sainte-Marguerite and the mainland.

All is still, the soft and warm calm of a spring morning in the south; and already it seems to me as if it were weeks, months, years since I left the talking, busy world; I feel arise within me the intoxication of solitude, the sweet delight of a rest that nothing will disturb, neither the white letter, nor the blue telegram, nor the bell at my door, nor the bark of my dog. I cannot be sent for, invited, carried off, overwhelmed by sweet smiles, or tormented with civilities. I am alone, really alone, really free. The smoke of the train runs along the coast; while I float in a winged home that is rocked and cradled: pretty as a bird, tiny as a nest, easier than a hammock, wandering over the waters at the caprice of the wind, independent and free! To attend to me and sail my boat, I have two sailors at my call, and books and provisions for a fortnight.

A whole fortnight without speaking, what joy! Overcome by the heat of the sun, I closed my eyes, enjoying the deep repose of the sea, when Bernard said in an undertone:

"The brig over yonder has a good breeze."

Over yonder, far away in front of Agay, a brig was in fact advancing toward us; I could distinctly see with my glasses her round sails filled by the wind.

"Pooh, it's the breeze from Agay," answered Raymond; "it is calm round Cape Roux."

"Talk away; we shall have a west wind," replied Bernard.

I leaned over to look at the barometer in the

saloon. It had fallen during the last half hour. I told Bernard, who smiled and whispered:

"It feels like a westerly wind, sir."

And now my curiosity awakens; the curiosity peculiar to all those who wander over the sea, which makes them see everything, notice everything, and take an interest in the smallest detail. My glasses no longer leave my eyes; I look at the color of the water on the horizon. It remains clear, glazed, glistening. If there is a breeze, it is still far off.

What a personage the wind is for the sailors! They speak of it as of a man, an all-powerful sovereign, sometimes terrible and sometimes kindly. It is the main topic of conversation all day long, and it is the subject of one's incessant thoughts throughout the days and the nights. You land folk know it not! As for us, we know it better than our father or our mother, the invisible, the terrible, the capricious, the sly, the treacherous, the devouring tyrant. We love it and we dread it; we know its maliciousness and its anger, which the warnings in the heavens or in the depths slowly teach us to anticipate. It forces us to think of it at every minute, at every second, for the struggle between it and us is indeed ceaseless. All our being is on the alert for the battle; our eye, to detect undiscernible appearances; our skin, to feel its caress or its blow; our spirit, to recognize its mood, foresee its caprices, judge whether it is calm or wayward. No enemy, no woman, gives us such an intense sensation of struggle, nor compels us to use so much foresight; for it is the master of the sea, it is that thing which we may avoid, make use of, or flee from, but which we can never subdue. And there reigns in the soul

of a sailor, as in that of a believer, the idea of an irascible and formidable God, the mysterious, religious, infinite fear of the wind, and respect for its power.

"Here it comes, sir," Bernard said to me.

Far away, very far away, at the end of the horizon, a blue-black line lengthens out on the water. It is nothing, a shade, an imperceptible shadow; it is the wind. Now we await it motionless, under the heat of the sun.

I look at the time, eight o'clock, and I say:

"Bless me, it is early for the westerly wind."

"It will blow hard in the afternoon," replied Bernard.

I raised my eyes to the sail hanging flat, limp and inert. Its great triangle seemed to reach up to the sky, for we had hoisted on the foremast the great fair-weather gaff topsail, and its yard overtopped the masthead by quite two yards. All is motionless; we might be on land. The barometer is still falling. However, the dark line perceived afar approaches. The metallic lustre of the waters is suddenly dimmed and transformed into a slaty shade. The sky is pure and cloudless.

Suddenly, around us the polished surface of the sea is rippled by imperceptible shivers gliding rapidly over it, appearing but to be effaced, as though it were riddled by a rain of thousands of little pinches of sand.

The sail quivers slightly, and presently the main boom slowly lurches over to starboard. A light breath now kisses my face, and the shivers on the water increase around us, as though the rain of sand had become continuous. The cutter begins to

move forward. She glides on upright, and a slight plash makes itself heard along her sides. I feel the tiller stiffen in my hand, that long brass cross-bar which looks in the sun like a fiery stem, and the breeze steadily increases. We shall have to tack, but what matter? The boat sails close to the wind, and if the breeze holds, we shall be able to beat up to Saint-Raphaël before the sun goes down.

We now approach the squadron whose six iron-clads and two dispatch boats turn slowly at their anchors, with their bows to the west. Then we tack toward the open sea, to pass the Formigues rocks, which are marked by a tower in the middle of the gulf. The breeze freshens more and more with surprising rapidity, and the waves rise up short and choppy. The yacht bends low under her full set of sails, and runs on, followed by the dingey, which with stretched-out painter is hurried through the foam, her nose in the air and stern in the water.

On nearing the island of Saint-Honorat we pass by a naked rock, red and bristling like a porcupine, so rugged, so armed with teeth, points and claws as to be well-nigh impossible of access; and one must advance with precaution, placing one's feet in the hollows between the tusks: it is called Saint-Ferréol.

A little earth, come from no one knows where, has accumulated in the holes and crevasses of the rock, and lilies grow in it, and beautiful blue irises, from seeds which seem to have fallen from heaven.

It is on this strange reef, in the open sea, that for five years lay buried and unknown the body of Paganini. The adventure is worthy of this artist, whose queer character, at once genial and weird,

gave him the reputation of being possessed by the devil, and who, with his odd appearance in body and face, his marvellous talent and excessive emaciation, has become an almost legendary being, a sort of Hoffmannesque phantasm.

As he was on his way home to Genoa, his native town, accompanied by his son, who alone could hear him now, so weak had his voice become, he died at Nice of cholera, on the 27th of May, 1840.

The son at once took the body of his father on board a ship and set sail for Italy. But the Genoese clergy refused to give burial to the demoniac. The court of Rome was consulted, but dared not grant the authorization. The body was, however, about to be disembarked, when the municipality made opposition, under the pretext that the artist had died of cholera. Genoa was at that time ravaged by an epidemic of this disease, and it was argued that the presence of this new corpse might possibly aggravate the evil.

Paganini's son then returned to Marseilles, where entrance to the port was refused him for the same reasons. He then went on to Cannes, where he could not penetrate either.

He therefore remained at sea, and the waves rocked the corpse of the fantastic artist, everywhere repelled by men. He no longer knew what to do, where to go, on which spot to lay the dead body so sacred to him, when he espied the naked rock of Saint-Ferréol in the midst of the billows. There at last he landed the coffin, and buried it in the centre of the islet.

It was only in 1845 that he went back with two

of his friends to take up the remains of his father, and transfer them to Genoa to the Villa Gajona.

Would one not have preferred that the wonderful violinist should have remained at rest upon the bristling reef, cradled by the song of the waves as they break on the torn and craggy rock?

Farther on, in the open sea, rises the castle of Saint-Honorat, which we had already perceived as we rounded the Cape of Antibes, and farther on still, a line of reefs ended by a tower called "Les Moines."

They are now quite white with surf and echoing with the roar of the breakers.

They form one of the most dangerous perils of the coast during the night, for they are marked by no light, and they are the cause of frequent wrecks.

A sudden gust keels us over, so that the water washes the deck, and I give orders for the gaff topsail to be lowered, the cutter being no longer able to carry it without endangering the safety of the mast.

The waves sink, swell and whiten; the wind whistles, angry and squally—a threatening wind, which cries, "Take care!"

"We shall have to go and sleep at Cannes," said Bernard.

And, in fact, at the end of half an hour, we had to lower the standing jib, and replace it by a smaller one, taking a reef in the sail at the same time; then a quarter of an hour later we had to take in a second reef. Thereupon I decided to make for the harbor at Cannes, a dangerous harbor, without shelter; a roadstead open to the southwesterly sea, where the ships are in constant danger. When one thinks

what a considerable amount of wealth would accrue to the town by the large number of foreign yachts that would flock there were they certain of finding a proper shelter, one understands how inveterate must be the indolence of this southern population, who have not yet been able to obtain from government such indispensable works. At ten o'clock we dropped anchor opposite the steamboat *Le Cannois*, and I landed, thoroughly disappointed at the interruption of my trip. The whole roadstead was white with foam.

CHAPTER II

CANNES, *April 7th*, 9 P.M.

Princes, princes, everywhere princes. They who love princes are indeed happy.

No sooner had I set foot yesterday morning on the promenade of the Croisette than I met three, one behind the other. In our democratic country, Cannes has become the city of titles.

If one could open minds in the same manner as one lifts the cover off a saucepan, one would find figures in the brain of the mathematician; outlines of actors gesticulating and declaiming in a theatrical author's head; the form of a woman in that of a lover's; licentious pictures in that of a rake; verses in the brain of a poet; and in the cranium of the folk who come to Cannes there would be found coronets of every description, floating about like vermicelli in soup.

Some men gather together in gambling houses because they are fond of cards, others meet on race

courses because they are fond of horses. People gather together at Cannes because they love imperial and royal highnesses.

There they are at home, and, in default of the kingdoms of which they have been dispossessed, reign peacefully in the salons of the faithful.

Great and small, poor and rich, sad and gay, all are to be found, according to taste. In general they are modest, strive to please, and show in their intercourse with humbler mortals a delicacy and affability that is hardly ever found in our own *députés*, those princes of the ballot.

However, if the princelings, the poor wandering princes without subjects or civil list, who come to live in homely fashion in this town of flowers and elegance, affect simplicity, and do not lay themselves open to ridicule, even from those most disrespectfully inclined, such is not the case with regard to the worshippers of highnesses.

These latter circle round their idols with an eagerness at once religious and comical; and directly they are deprived of one, they fly off in quest of another, as though their mouths could only open to say "Monseigneur" or "Madame," and speak in the third person.

They cannot be with you five minutes without telling you what the princess replied, what the grand duke said; the promenade planned with the one, the witty saying of the other. One feels, one sees, one guesses that they frequent no other society but that of persons of royal blood, and if they deign to speak to you, it is in order to inform you exactly of what takes place on these heights.

What relentless struggles, struggles in which

every possible ruse is employed in order to have at one's table, at least once during the season, a prince, a real prince, one of those at a premium. What respect one inspires when one has met a grand duke at lawn tennis, or when one has merely been presented to Wales—as the dandies say.

To write down one's name at the door of these "exiles," as Daudet calls them, of these broken-down princes, as others would say, creates a constant delicate, absorbing, and engrossing occupation. The visitors' book lies open in the hall between a couple of lackeys, one of whom proffers a pen. One inscribes one's name at the tag end of some two thousand names of every sort and description, among which titles swarm and the noble particle "de" abounds! After which, one goes off with the haughty air of a man just ennobled, as happy as one who has accomplished a sacred duty, and one proudly says to the first person met: "I have just written down my name at the Grand Duke of Gerolstein's!" Then, in the evening, at dinner, one says in an important tone: "I noticed just now, on the Grand Duke of Gerolstein's list, the names of X——, Y——, and Z——." And every one is interested and listens as if the event were of the greatest importance.

But why laugh and be astonished at the harmless and innocent mania of the elegant admirers of princes, when we meet in Paris fifty different races of hero worshippers who are in no wise less amusing?

Whoever has a salon must needs have some celebrities to show there, and a hunt is organized in order to secure them. There is hardly a woman

in society and of the best who is not anxious to have her artist or her artists; and she will give dinners for them in order that the whole world may know that hers is a clever set.

Between affecting to possess the wit one has not, but which one summons with a flourish of trumpets, or affecting princely intimacies—where is the difference?

Among the great men most sought after by women, old and young, are most assuredly musicians. Some houses possess a complete collection of them. Moreover, these artists possess the inestimable advantage of being useful at evening parties. However, people who desire a superlative *rara avis* can hardly hope to bring two together in the same room. We may add that there is not a meanness of which any woman, a leader of society, is not capable, in order to embellish her salon with a celebrated composer. The delicate attentions usually employed to secure a painter or only a literary man become quite inadequate when the subject is a tradesman of sounds. For him allurements and praise hitherto unknown are employed. His hands are kissed like those of a king, he is worshipped as a god, when he has deigned to execute his "Regina Cœli." A hair of his beard is worn in a ring; a button fallen from his breeches one evening in a violent movement of his arm, during the execution of the grand finale of his "Doux Repos," becomes a medal, a sacred medal worn in the bosom, hanging from a golden chain.

Painters are of less value, although still rather sought after. They are not so divine, and more bohemian. Their manners are less courteous and,

above all, not sufficiently sublime. They often replace inspiration by broad jests and silly puns. They carry with them too much of the perfume of the studio, and those who by dint of watchfulness have managed to get rid of it, only exchange one atmosphere for another, that of affectation. And then they are a fickle, light, and bragging set. No one is certain of keeping them long, whereas the musician builds his nest in the family circle.

Of late years the literary man has been sought after. He presents many great advantages: he talks, he talks lengthily, he talks a great deal, his conversation suits every kind of public, and as his profession is to be intelligent, he can be listened to and admired with all security.

The woman who is possessed with the mania for having at her house a literary man, just as one would have a parrot whose chatter should attract all the neighboring *concierges,* has to take her choice between poets and novelists. There is more of the ideal about the poet, more spontaneity about the novelist. The poets are more sentimental, the novelists more positive. It is a matter of taste and constitution. The poet has more charm, the novelist has often more wit. But the novelist presents dangers that are not met with in the poet: he pries, pillages, and makes capital of all he sees. With him there is no tranquillity, no certainty that he will not some day lay you bare in the pages of a book. His eye is like a pump that sucks up everything, like the hand of a thief that is always at work. Nothing escapes him; he gathers and picks up ceaselessly; he notices the movements, the gestures, the intentions, the slightest incidents and

events; he picks up the smallest words, the smallest actions, the smallest thing. He makes stock from morning till night of these observations, out of which he will make a good, telling story, a story that will make the round of the world, which will be read, discussed, commented upon by thousands and thousands of people. And the most terrible part of all is that the wretch cannot help drawing striking portraits, in spite of himself, unconsciously, because he sees things as they are, and he must relate what he sees. Notwithstanding the cunning he uses in disguising his personages, it will be said: "Did you recognize Mr. X—— and Mrs. Y——? They are striking resemblances."

It is assuredly as dangerous for people in good society to invite and make much of novelists as it would be for a miller to breed rats in his mill.

And yet they are held in great favor.

When, therefore, a woman has fixed her choice on the writer she intends to adopt, she lays siege to him by means of every variety of compliments, attractions and indulgence. Like water which, drop by drop, slowly wears away the hardest rock, the fulsome praise falls at each word on the impressionable heart of the literary man. Then, when she sees that he is moved, touched, and won by the constant flattery, she isolates him, severing, little by little, the ties he may have elsewhere, and imperceptibly accustoms him to come to her house, make himself happy, and there enshrine his thoughts. In order the more thoroughly to acclimatize him in her house, she paves the way for his success, brings him forward, sets him in relief, and displays for him, be-

fore all the old *habitués* of the household, marked consideration and boundless admiration.

At last, realizing that he is now an idol, he remains in the temple. He finds, moreover, that the position affords him every advantage, for all the other women lavish their most delicate favors upon him to entice him away from his conqueror. If, however, he is clever, he will not hearken to the entreaties and coquetries with which he is overwhelmed. And the more faithful he appears, the more he will be sought after, implored and loved. Ah! let him beware of allowing these drawing-room sirens to entice him away; he will immediately lose two-thirds of his value if he once becomes public property.

Soon he forms a literary circle, a church of which he is the deity, the only deity, for true faiths never have more than one god. People will flock to the house to see him, to hear him, to admire him, as one comes from afar to visit certain shrines. He will be envied! She will be envied! They will converse upon literature as priests talk of dogmas, scientifically and solemnly; they will be listened to, both the one and the other, and on leaving this literary salon, one will feel as though one were quitting a cathedral.

Other men are also sought after, but in a lesser degree; for instance, generals, who, neglected by society and not held in much greater consideration than *députés*, are yet in demand among the middle classes. The *député* is only in request at moments of crises. He is kept on hand for a dinner now and then during a parliamentary lull. The scholar has also his artisans—every variety of taste exists in

nature; and a clerk in an office is highly esteemed by folk who live up six pairs of stairs. However, this sort of people do not come to Cannes; there are only a few timid representatives to be seen of the middle class.

It is only in the forenoon that the noble visitors are to be met on the Croisette.

The Croisette is a long semi-circular promenade that follows the line of the beach, from the headland in front of Sainte-Marguerite down to the harbor overlooked by the old town.

Young and slender women—it is good style to be thin—dressed in the English fashion, walk along with rapid step, escorted by active young men in lawn-tennis suits. But from time to time appears some poor emaciated creature, dragging himself along with languid step, and leaning on the arm of a mother, brother or sister. He coughs and gasps, poor thing, wrapped up in shawls notwithstanding the heat, and watches us, as we pass, with deep, despairing and envious glances.

He suffers and dies, for this charming and balmy country is the hospital of society and the flowery cemetery of aristocratic Europe.

The terrible disease which never relents, and is now called tuberculosis, the disease that gnaws, burns and destroys men by thousands, seems to have chosen this coast on which to finish off its victims.

How truly in every part of the world this lovely and terrible spot must be accursed, this anteroom of death, perfumed and sweet, where so many humble and royal families, burghers or princes, have left some one, some child on whom they concentrated all

their hopes and lavished all their love and tenderness.

I call to mind Mentone, the warmest and healthiest of these winter residences. Even, as in warlike cities, the fortresses can be seen standing out on the surrounding heights, so in this region of moribunds the cemetery is visible on the summit of a hill.

What a spot it would be for the living, that garden where the dead lie asleep! Roses, roses, everywhere roses. They are blood red, or pale, or white, or streaked with veins of scarlet. The tombs, the paths, the places still unoccupied and which to-morrow will be filled, all are covered with them. Their strong perfume brings giddiness, making both head and legs falter.

And all those who lie there were but sixteen, eighteen or twenty years of age.

One wanders on from tomb to tomb, reading the names of those youthful victims, killed by the implacable disease. 'Tis a children's cemetery, a cemetery similar to the young girls' balls where no married couples are admitted.

From the cemetery the view extends to the left in the direction of Italy as far as the Bordighera headland, where the white houses stretch out into the sea; and to the right, as far as Cape Martin, which dips its leafy coast in the water.

Nevertheless all around, all along these delightful shores, we are in the home of Death. But it is discreet, veiled, full of tact and bashfulness, well bred in fact. Never does one meet it face to face, although at every moment it passes near.

It might even be thought that no one dies in this country, so thorough is the complicity of deceit in

which this sovereign revels. But how it is felt, how it is detected; how often a glimpse is caught of its black robes! Truly all the roses and the orange blossoms are requisite to prevent the breeze being laden with the dread smell which is exhaled from the chamber of death.

Never is a coffin seen in the streets, never any funeral trappings, never is a death-knell heard. Yesterday's emaciated pedestrian no longer passes beneath your window, and that is all. If you are astonished at no longer seeing him, and inquire after him, the landlord and servants tell you with a smile that he had got better and by the doctor's advice had left for Italy. In each hotel Death has its secret stairs, its confidants and its accomplices. A philosopher of olden times would have said many fine things upon the contrast of the elegance and misery which here elbow one another.

It is twelve o'clock, the promenade is now deserted, and I return on board the *Bel-Ami*, where awaits me an unpretending breakfast prepared by Raymond, whom I find dressed up in a white apron, frying potatoes.

All the remainder of the day I read.

The wind was still blowing violently, and the yacht danced between her anchors, for we had been obliged to lower the starboard anchor also. The motion ended by benumbing me, and I fell into a long doze. When Bernard came into the cabin to light the candles it was seven o'clock, and as the surf along the quay made landing difficult, I dined on board.

After dinner I went up and sat in the open air. Around me Cannes stretched forth her many lights.

Nothing can be prettier than a town lighted up and seen from the sea. On the left the old quarter, with its houses that seemed to climb one upon the other, mingled its lights with that of the stars; on the right the gas lamps of the Croisette extended like an enormous serpent a mile and a half long.

And then I reflected that in all the villas, in all the hotels people were gathered together this evening as they were last night, as they will be tomorrow, and that they are talking. Talking! about what? the princes! the weather! And then?—the weather!—the princes!—and then—about nothing!

Can anything be more dreary than *table d'hôte* conversation? I have lived in hotels, I have endured the emptiness of the human soul as it is there laid bare. In truth, one must be hedged in by the most determined indifference not to weep with grief, disgust and shame when one hears men talk. Man, the ordinary man, rich, known, esteemed, respected, held in consideration, is satisfied with himself, and he knows nothing, he understands nothing, yet he talks of intelligence as though he knew all about it.

How blinded and intoxicated we must be by our foolish pride, to fancy ourselves anything more than animals scarcely superior to other animals. Listen to them, the fools, seated round the table! They are talking! Talking with gentle, confiding ingenuousness, and they imagine that they are exchanging ideas! What ideas? They say where they have been walking: "It was a very pretty walk, but rather cold coming home"; "the cooking is not bad in the hotel, although hotel food is always rather spicy." And they relate what they have done, what they like, what they believe.

I fancy I behold the deformity of their souls as a monstrous fœtus in a jar of alcohol. I assist at the slow birth of the commonplace sayings they constantly repeat; I watch the words as they drop from the granary of stupidity into their imbecile mouths, and from their mouths into the inert atmosphere which bears them to my ears.

But their ideas, their noblest, most solemn, most respected ideas, are they not the unimpeachable proof of the omnipotence of stupidity—eternal, universal, indestructible stupidity?

All their conceptions of God, an awkward deity, whose first creations are such failures that He must needs re-create them, a deity who listens to our secrets and notes them down, a God who, in turn, policeman, Jesuit, lawyer, gardener, is conceived, now in cuirass, now in robes, now in wooden shoes; then the negations of God based upon pure terrestrial logic, the arguments for and against, the history of religious beliefs, of schisms, heresies, philosophies, the affirmations as well as the doubts, the puerility of principles, the ferocious and bloody violence of the originators of hypotheses, the utter chaos of contestation; in short, every miserable effort of this wretchedly impotent being man, impotent in conception, in imagination, in knowledge, all prove that he was thrown upon this absurdly small world for the sole purpose of eating, drinking, manufacturing children and little songs, and killing his neighbor by way of pastime.

Happy are those whom life satisfies, who enjoy it and are content.

There are some such who, easily pleased, are delighted with everything. They love the sun and the

rain, the snow and the fog; they love festivities as well as the calm of their own homes; they love all they see, all they do, all they say, all they hear.

They lead either an easy life, quiet and satisfied, amid their offspring, or a restless existence, full of pleasures and amusements.

In neither case are they dull.

Life, for them, is an amusing kind of play, in which they are themselves the actors; an excellent and varied show, which though offering nothing unexpected, thoroughly delights them.

Other men, however, who run through at a glance the narrow circle of human satisfaction, remain undismayed before the emptiness of happiness, the monotony and poverty of earthly joys!

As soon as they have reached thirty years of age all is ended for them. What have they to expect? Nothing new can interest them; they have made the circuit of our meagre pleasures.

Happy are those who know not the disgust for the same acts constantly repeated; happy are those who have the strength to recommence each day the same task, with the same gestures, amid the same furniture, in front of the same horizon. Under the same horizon, under the same sky, to go out in the same streets, where they meet the same faces and the same animals. Happy are those who do not perceive with unutterable disgust that nothing changes and that all is weariness.

We must indeed have a limited, sluggish intellect to be so easily pleased and satisfied with what is. How is it that the world audience has not yet called out, "Curtain," has not yet demanded the next act, with other beings than mankind, other manners,

other pleasures, other plants, other planets, other inventions, other adventures?

Is it possible no one has yet felt a loathing for the sameness of the human face, of the animals who, in their unvarying instincts, transmitted in their seed from the first to the last of their stock, seem to be but living machinery; a hatred of landscapes eternally the same and of pleasures never varied?

Console yourself, it is said, with the love of science and art.

But is it not evident that we are always shut up in ourselves, without ever being able to quit ourselves, forever condemned to drag the chains of our wingless dream?

All the progress made by our cerebral effort consists in establishing material facts by means of instruments ridiculously imperfect, which, however, make up in a certain degree for the inefficiency of our organs. Every twenty years some unhappy inquirer, who generally dies in the attempt, discovers that the atmosphere contains a gas hitherto unknown; that an imponderable, inexplicable, unqualifiable force can be obtained by rubbing a piece of wax on cloth; that among the innumerable unknown stars there is one that has not yet been noticed, in the immediate vicinity of another which had not only been observed, but even designated by name, for many years. What matter?

Our diseases are due to microbes? Very well. But where do those microbes come from and the diseases of these invisible ones? And the suns, whence come they?

We know nothing, we understand nothing, we can do nothing, we foresee nothing, we imagine

nothing, we are shut up, imprisoned in ourselves. And there are people who marvel at the genius of humanity!

Art? Painting consists in reproducing in colors monotonous landscapes which seldom resemble nature, in portraying men and striving to make them look like the originals, without ever succeeding. Obstinately and uselessly one struggles to imitate what is; and the result is a motionless and dumb copy of the actions of life, which is barely comprehensible even to the educated eye that one has sought to attract.

Wherefore such efforts? Wherefore such a vain imitation? Wherefore this trivial reproduction of things in themselves so dull? How petty!

Poets do with words what painters try to do with colors. Again, wherefore?

When one has read four of the most talented, of the most ingenious authors, it is idle to open another. And nothing more can be learned. They also, these men, can but imitate men. They exhaust themselves in sterile labor. For as man does not change, their useless art is immutable. Ever since our poor minds have awakened man is the same; his sentiments, his beliefs, his sensations are the same. He has neither advanced nor retrograded; he has never moved. Of what use is it to me to learn what I am, to read what I think, to see myself portrayed in the trivial adventures of a novel?

Ah! if poets could vanquish space, explore the planets, discover other worlds, other beings; vary unceasingly for my mind the nature and form of things, convey me constantly through a changeful and surprising Unknown, open for me mysterious

gates in unexpected and marvellous horizons, I would read them night and day. But, impotent as they are, they can but change the place of a word, and show me my own image, as the painters do. Of what use is all this?

For man's thought is motionless.

And the precise limits, so nigh, so insurmountable, once attained, it turns like a horse in a circus, like a fly shut up in a bottle, fluttering against the sides and uselessly dashing itself against them.

And yet, for want of any better occupation, thought is always a solace, when one lives alone.

On this little boat rocked by the sea, that a wave could fill and upset, I know, I feel, how true it is that nothing of all we know really exists, for the earth which floats in empty space is even more isolated, more lost than this skiff on the billows. Their importance is the same; their destiny will be accomplished. And I rejoice at understanding the nothingness of the belief and the vanity of the hopes which our insect-like pride has begotten.

I went to bed, cradled by the pitching of the boat, and slept profoundly, as one sleeps at sea, till the moment when Bernard awoke me to say:

"Bad weather, sir; we cannot sail this morning." The wind had fallen, but the sea, very rough in the open, would not allow of our making sail for Saint-Raphaël.

Another day to be spent at Cannes!

At about twelve o'clock a westerly wind again got up, less strong than the day before, and I resolved to take advantage of it and visit the squadron in Gulf Juan.

In crossing the roads the *Bel-Ami* jumped about

like a goat, and I had to steer very carefully in order to avoid, with each wave which took us broadsides, having a mass of water dashed in my face. Soon, however, I was sheltered by the islands and entered the channel under the fortress of Sainte-Marguerite.

Its straight wall stretches down to the rocks, washed by the waves, and its summit hardly overtops the slightly elevated coast of the island. It is somewhat like a head buried between two high shoulders.

The spot where Bazaine climbed down can be easily made out.

It was not necessary to be much of a gymnast to slide down those accommodating rocks.

The escape was related to me with every detail by a man who pretended to be, and probably was, thoroughly well informed.

Bazaine was allowed a good deal of liberty, his wife and children being permitted to come and see him every day. Madame Bazaine, who was an energetic woman, declared to her husband that she would leave him forever and carry off the children if he would not make his escape, and she explained her plan. He hesitated at first, on account of the danger of the flight and the doubtfulness of success, but when he saw that his wife was determined to carry out her plan, he consented.

Thereupon every day some toys for the little ones were brought into the fortress, among others an entire set of appliances for drawing-room gymnastics. Out of these toys was made the knotted rope that the marshal was to make use of. It was very slowly made, in order to give rise to no suspicion,

and when finished it was hid away by a friendly hand in a corner of the prison yard.

The date of the flight was then decided upon. They chose a Sunday, the supervision appearing to be less rigorous on that day.

Madame Bazaine then absented herself for a few days.

The marshal usually walked about in the yard till eight o'clock in the evening, in company with the governor of the prison, a pleasant man whose agreeable conversation was a resource to Bazaine. Then he would go back to his rooms, which the chief jailer locked and bolted in the presence of his superior officer.

On the evening of the escape, Bazaine pretended he was indisposed, and expressed a wish to retire an hour earlier than usual. He returned therefore to his aparament, but as soon as the governor had gone off to call the jailer and tell him to lock up the captive, the marshal came out again quickly and hid himself in the yard.

The empty prison was locked up, and the jailers went home.

At about eleven o'clock Bazaine, armed with the ladder, left his hiding place, fastened the ropes and made his descent on to the rocks.

At dawn of day an accomplice unfastened the ladder and threw it over the walls.

Toward eight o'clock in the morning the governor, surprised at not seeing anything of his prisoner, who was wont to be an early riser, sent to inquire about him. The marshal's valet refused, however, to disturb his master.

At length, at nine o'clock, the governor forced open the door and found the cage empty.

On her side Madame Bazaine, in order to carry out her scheme, had applied to a man who was indebted to her husband for a most important service. She appealed to a grateful heart, and gained an ally both energetic and devoted. Together they settled all the details; she then went under an assumed name to Genoa, and, under pretext of an excursion to Naples, hired for a thousand francs a day a little Italian steamer, stipulating that the trip should last at least a week, and that it might be extended to another week on the same terms.

The vessel started, but no sooner were they at sea than the traveller appeared to change her mind and asked the captain if he would object to going as far as Cannes to fetch her sister-in-law. The sailor willingly consented, and he dropped anchor on Sunday evening in the Gulf Juan.

Madame Bazaine was set on shore and ordered the boat to keep within hail. Her devoted accomplice was awaiting her in another boat near the promenade of the Croisette, and they crossed the channel which separates the mainland from the little island of Sainte-Marguerite. There her husband was waiting on the rocks, his clothes torn, face bruised and hands bleeding. The sea being rather rough, he was obliged to wade through the water to reach the boat, which otherwise would have been dashed to pieces against the coast.

When they returned to the mainland, they cast the boat adrift.

They rejoined the first boat, and then at last the vessel, which had remained with steam up. Madame

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Bazaine informed the captain that her sister-in-law was not well enough to join her, and pointing to the marshal, she added:

"Not having a servant, I have hired a valet. The fool has just tumbled down on the rocks and got himself in the mess you see. Send him, if you please, down to the sailors, and give him what is necessary to dress his wounds and mend his clothes."

Bazaine went down and spent the night in the forecastle.

The next morning at break of day they were out at sea; then Madame Bazaine again changed her mind, and pleading indisposition, had herself taken back to Genoa.

However, the news of the escape had already spread, and the populace hearing of it, a clamoring mob assembled under the hotel windows. The uproar soon became so violent that the terrified landlord insisted on the travellers escaping by a private door.

I relate this story as it was told to me, but I do not vouch for its correctness.

We drew near the squadron, the heavy ironclads standing out in single file, like battle towers built in the sea. They were the *Colbert*, the *Dévastation*, the *Amiral-Duperré*, the *Courbet*, the *Indomptable*, and the *Richelieu;* two dispatch boats, the *Hirondelle* and the *Milan;* and four torpedo boats going through evolutions in the gulf.

I wanted to visit the *Courbet*, as it passes for the most perfect type in the French navy.

Nothing can give a better idea of human labor, of the intricate and formidable labor done by the ingeniously clever hands of the puny human animal,

than the enormous iron citadels which float and sail about, bearing an army of soldiers, an arsenal of monstrous arms, the enormous masses of which are composed of tiny pieces fitted, soldered, forged, bolted together, a toil of ants and giants, which shows at the same time all the genius, all the weakness and all the irretrievable barbarousness of the race, so active and so feeble, directing all its efforts toward creating instruments for its own self-destruction.

Those who in former days raised up cathedrals in stone, carved as finely as any lacework, fairy-like palaces to shelter childish and pious fancies, were they worth less than those who nowadays launch forth on the sea these iron houses, real temples of Death?

At the moment that I leave the ship to get on board my cockleshell, I hear the sound of firing on shore. It is the regiment at Antibes practicing rifle shooting on the sands and among the pine woods. The smoke rises in white flakes, like evaporating clouds of cotton, and I can see the red trousers of the soldiers as they run along the beach.

The naval officers suddenly become interested, point their glasses landward, and their hearts beat faster at this spectacle of mimic warfare.

At the mere mention of the word war, I am seized with a sense of bewilderment, as though I heard of witchcraft, of the inquisition, of some far distant thing, ended long ago, abominable and monstrous, against all natural law.

When we talk of cannibals, we proudly smile and proclaim our superiority over these savages. Which are the savages, the true savages? Those who fight

to eat the vanquished or those who fight to kill, only to kill?

The gallant little soldiers running about over there are as surely doomed to death as the flocks of sheep driven along the road by the butcher. They will fall on some plain, with their heads split open by sabre cuts or their chests riddled by bullets, and yet they are young men who might work, produce something, be useful. Their fathers are old and poverty-stricken, their mothers, who during twenty years have loved them, adored them as only mothers can adore, may perchance hear in six months or a year that the son, the child, the big fellow, reared with so much care, at such an expense and with so much love, has been cast in a hole like a dead dog, after having been ripped open by a bullet and trampled, crushed, mangled by the rush of cavalry charges. Why have they killed her boy, her beautiful boy, her sole hope, her pride, her life? She cannot understand. Yes, indeed, why?

War! fighting! slaughtering! butchering men! And to think that now, in our own century, with all our civilization, with the expansion of science and the height of philosophy to which the human race is supposed to have attained, we should have schools in which we teach the art of killing, of killing from a distance, to perfection, numbers of people at the same time; poor devils, innocent men, fathers of families, men of untarnished reputation. The most astounding thing is that the people do not rise up against the governing power. What difference is there then between monarchies and republics? And what is more astounding still, why does society not rise up bodily in rebellion at the word "war"?

Ah! We shall ever continue to live borne down by the old and odious customs, the criminal prejudices, the ferocious ideas of our barbarous forefathers, for we are but animals, and we shall remain animals, led only by instinct, and that nothing will ever change.

Should we not have spurned any other than Victor Hugo, who should have launched forth the grand cry of deliverance and truth?

"To-day might is called violence, and is beginning to be condemned; war is arraigned. Civilization, at the demand of all humanity, directs an inquiry and indicts the great criminal brief against conquerors and generals. The nations are beginning to understand that the aggrandizement of a crime can in no way lessen it; that if murder is a crime, to murder a great many does not create any attenuating circumstance; that if robbery is a disgrace, invasion cannot be a glory.

"Ah! Let us proclaim the peremptory truth, let us dishonor war."

Idle anger, poetic indignation! War is more venerated than ever.

A clever artist in such matters, a slaughtering genius, Monsieur de Moltke replied one day to some peace delegates in the following extraordinary words:

"War is holy and of divine institution; it is one of the sacred laws of nature; it keeps alive in men all the great and noble sentiments, honor, disinterestedness, virtue, courage; in one word, it prevents them from falling into the most hideous materialism."

Therefore to collect a herd of some four hundred

thousand men, march day and night without respite, to think of nothing, study nothing, learn nothing, read nothing, be of no earthly use to any one, rot with dirt, lie down in mire, live like brutes in a continual besotment, pillage towns, burn villages, ruin nations; then meeting another similar agglomeration of human flesh, rush upon it, shed lakes of blood, cover plains with pounded flesh mingled with muddy and bloody earth; pile up heaps of slain; have arms and legs blown off, brains scattered without benefit to any one, and perish at the corner of some field while your old parents, your wife and children are dying of hunger; this is what is called not falling into the most hideous materialism!

Warriors are the scourges of the earth. We struggle against nature and ignorance, against obstacles of all kinds, in order to lessen the hardships of our miserable existence. Men, benefactors, scholars wear out their lives toiling, seeking what may help, what may solace their brethren. Eager in their useful work, they pile up discovery on discovery, enlarging the human mind, extending science, adding something each day to the stock of human knowledge, to the welfare, the comfort, the strength of their country.

War is declared. In six months the generals have destroyed the efforts of twenty years' patience and genius. And this is what is called not falling into the most hideous materialism.

We have seen war. We have seen men maddened and gone back to their brute estate, killing for mere pleasure, killing out of terror, out of bravado, from sheer ostentation. Then, when right no longer exists, when law is dead, when all notion of justice has

disappeared, we have seen ruthlessly shot down innocent beings who, picked up along the road, had become objects of suspicion simply because they were afraid. We have seen dogs as they lay chained up at their master's gate killed in order to try a new revolver; we have seen cows riddled with bullets as they lay in the fields, without reason, only to fire off guns, just for fun.

And this is what is called not falling into the most hideous materialism. To invade a country, to kill the man who defends his home on the plea that he wears a smock and has no forage cap on his head, to burn down the houses of the poor creatures who are without bread, to break, to steal furniture, drink the wine found in the cellars, violate the women found in the streets, consume thousands of francs' worth of powder and leave behind misery and cholera.

This is what is called not falling into the most hideous materialism.

What have they ever done to show their intelligence, these valiant warriors? Nothing. What have they invented? Guns and cannons. That is all.

The inventor of the wheelbarrow, has he not done more for humanity by the simple and practical idea of fitting a wheel between two poles than the inventor of modern fortifications?

What remains of Greece? Books and marbles. Is she great by what she conquered or by what she produced? Was it the invasion of the Persians that prevented her from falling into the most hideous materialism? Was it the invasion of the barbarians that saved Rome and regenerated her?

Did Napoleon the First continue the great intellectual movement begun by the philosophers at the end of the last century?

Well, yes, since governments assume the right of death over the people, there is nothing astonishing in the people sometimes assuming the right of death over governments.

They defend themselves. They are right. No one has an absolute right to govern others. It can only be done for the good of those who are governed. Whosoever governs must consider it as much his duty to avoid war as it is that of the captain of a vessel to avoid shipwreck.

When a captain has lost his ship, he is judged and condemned if found guilty of negligence or even of incapacity.

Why should not governments be brought before a tribunal after every declaration of war? If the people understood this, if they took the law into their own hands against the murdering powers, if they refused to allow themselves to be killed without a reason, if they used their weapons against those who distributed them to slaughter with, that day war would indeed be a dead letter. But that day will never dawn!

CHAPTER III

AGAY, *April 8th.*

"Fine weather, sir."

I get up and go on deck. It is three o'clock in the morning. The sea is calm, the infinite heavens look like an immense dark vault sown with grains of fire. A very light breeze comes from off the land.

The coffee is hot. We swallow it down, and, without losing a moment, in order to take advantage of the favorable wind, we set sail.

Once more we glide over the waters toward the open sea. The coast disappears, all around us looks black. It is indeed a sensation, a disturbing and delicious emotion to plunge onward into the empty night, into the deep silence on the sea, far from everything. It seems as though one were quitting the world, as though one would never reach any land, as though there were no more shores and even no more days. At my feet a little lantern throws a light upon the compass that guides me on my way. We must run at least three miles in the open when the sun has risen, to round Cape Roux and the Drammont in safety, whatever may be the wind. To avoid any accidents, I have had the warning lights lit, red on the port and green on the starboard side. And I am enraptured with this silent, uninterrupted, quiet flight.

Suddenly a cry is heard in front of us. I am startled, for the voice is near; and I can perceive nothing, nothing but the obscure wall of darkness into which I am plunging and which closes again behind me. Raymond, who is on watch in the bows, says to me: "'Tis a tartan going east. Put the helm up, sir; we shall pass astern." And of a sudden, nigh at hand, uprises a vague but startling phantom, the large drifting shadow of a big sail, seen but for a few seconds and quickly vanishing. Nothing is more strange, more fantastic and more thrilling than these rapid apparitions at sea during the night. The fishing and sand boats carry no lights; they are, therefore, only seen as they pass us by, leaving us

with the impression as of some supernatural encounter.

I hear in the distance the whistling of a bird. It approaches, passes by and goes off. Oh, that I could rove like that!

At last dawn breaks, slowly, gently, without a cloud, and the day begins, a real summer's day.

Raymond asserts that we shall have an east wind, Bernard still believes in a westerly one and advises my changing our course and sailing on the starboard tack straight toward the Drammont, which stands out in the distance. I at once agree with him, and under the gentle breath of a dying breeze we draw nearer to the Esterel. The long red shore drops into the blue water, giving it a violet tinge. It is strange, pretty, bristling with numberless points and gulfs, capricious and coquettish rocks, the thousand fancies of a much-admired mountain. On its slopes the pine forests reach up to the granite summits, which resemble castles, towns and armies of stones running after each other. And at its foot the sea is so clear that the sandy shoals or the weedy bottoms can be distinguished.

Ay, verily, I do feel on certain days such a horror of all that is that I long for death. The invariable monotony of landscapes, faces and thoughts becomes an intensely acute suffering. The commonplaceness of the universe astonishes and revolts me, the littleness of all things fills me with disgust, and I am overwhelmed at the meagreness of human life.

At other times, on the contrary, I enjoy everything as an animal does. If my restless, agitated mind, hypertrophied by work, bounds onward to hopes that are not those of our race, and then, after having

realized that all is vanity, falls back into a contempt for all that is, my animal body, at least, is enraptured with all the intoxication of life. Like the birds, I love the sky; like the prowling wolf, the forests; I delight in rocky heights, like a chamois; the thick grass I love to roll in and gallop over like a horse, and, like a fish, I revel in the clear waters. I feel thrilling within me the sensations of all the different species of animals, of all their instincts, of all the confused longings of inferior creatures. I love the earth as they do, not as other men do; I love it without admiring it, without poetry, without exaltation; I love with a deep and animal attachment, contemptible yet holy, all that lives, all that grows, all we see; for all this, leaving my spirit calm, excites only my eyes and my heart; the days, the nights, the rivers, the seas, the storms, the woods, the hues of dawn, the glance of woman, her very touch.

The gentle ripple of water on the sandy shore or in the rocky granite affects and moves me, and the joy that fills me as I feel myself driven forward by the wind and carried along by the waves, proceeds from the abandonment of myself to the mere brute and natural forces of creation, from the fact of my return to a primitive state.

When the weather is beautiful, as it is to-day, I feel in my veins the blood of the lascivious and vagabond fauns of olden times. I am no longer the brother of mankind, but the brother of all creatures and of all nature!

The sun mounts above the horizon. The breeze dies away as it did the day before yesterday, but the west wind foretold by Bernard does not rise any more than the easterly one announced by Raymond.

Till ten o'clock we float motionless like a wreck, then a little breath from the open sea starts us on our road, falls, rises again, seems to mock us, glancing across the sail, promising at each moment a breeze that does not come. It is nothing, a mere whiff, a flutter of a fan; nevertheless it is sufficient to prevent our being stationary. The porpoises, those clowns of the sea, play about around us, dashing out of the water with rapid bounds, as though they would take flight, striking into the air like lightning, then plunging and rising again farther off.

At about one o'clock, as we lay broadside on to Agay, the breeze died away, and I saw that I should sleep out at sea if I did not man the boat to tow the yacht into the bay.

I therefore made the two men get into the dingey, and when at a distance of some thirty yards or so they began to tug me along. A fierce sun was glaring on the water, and its burning rays beat down upon the deck.

The two sailors rowed in slow and regular fashion like worn-out cranks, which, though working with difficulty, ceaselessly continue their mechanical labor.

The Bay of Agay forms a very pretty dock, well sheltered and closed on one side by upright red rocks, overlooked by the semaphore on the summit of the mountain, and prolonged toward the open sea by the Ile d'Or, so called on account of its color; while on the other side is a line of sunken rocks and a small headland level with the surface of the water, bearing a lighthouse to mark the entry.

At the farther end is an inn, ready for the entertainment of skippers of vessels that have taken refuge there from stress of weather, or for fishermen

during the summer; and a railway station where trains only stop twice a day, and where no one ever gets out; and a pretty river that winds away into the Esterel, as far as the valley named Malin-fermet, which is as full of pink oleanders as any African ravine.

No road leads from the interior to this delicious bay. Only a pathway takes you to Saint-Raphaël, passing through the porphyry quarries of Drammont; but no vehicle could traverse it. We are, therefore, quite lost in the mountain.

I resolved to wander about till nightfall in the paths bordered by cytisus and gum mastic. The strong, perfumed odor of native plants filled the air, mingling with the powerful resinous breath of the forest, which seemed to be panting in the heat.

After an hour's walk, I was deep among the pine trees, scattered sparsely on a gentle declivity of the mountain. The purple granite rocks—the bones of the earth—seemed reddened by the sun, and I wended my way slowly, happy as the lizards must be on burning hot stones, when I perceived on the summit of the mountain, coming toward me, without seeing me, two lovers lost in the depths of their love dream.

'Twas a charmingly pretty sight. On they came, with arms entwined, moving with heedless footsteps through the alternating sun and shade that flecked the sloping banks.

She appeared to me very graceful and very simple, with a gray travelling dress and a dashing coquettish felt hat. I hardly saw him; I only noticed that he seemed well bred. I had seated myself behind the trunk of a pine tree, to watch them pass by.

They did not perceive me, and continued their descent with interlocked arms, silently and without a word, so absorbed were they in their love.

When I lost sight of them I felt as though a sadness had fallen on my heart. A felicity that I did not know had passed near me, and I surmised that it was the greatest felicity of all. I returned toward the Bay of Agay, too dejected now to continue my stroll.

Until the evening I lay stretched out on the grass by the side of the river, and at about seven o'clock I went into the inn for dinner.

My men had notified the innkeeper, and he was expecting me. My table was set in the whitewashed room beside another table, at which sat my lovers opposite each other, fondly gazing into each other's eyes.

I felt ashamed at disturbing them, as though *I* were committing a mean and unbecoming action.

They stared at me for a few senconds, and then resumed their low-toned conversation.

The innkeeper, who had known me for a long time, took a seat near mine. He talked of wild boars and rabbits, the fine weather, the *mistral*, about an Italian captain who had slept at the inn a few nights before, and then to flatter my vanity, he praised my yacht, the black hull of which I could see through the window, with its tall mast, and my red and white pennant floating aloft.

My neighbors, who had eaten very rapidly, soon left. As for me, I dawdled about, looking at the young moon shedding its soft rays over the little roadstead. At last I saw my dingey nearing the shore, scattering lines of silver as it advanced

through the pale, motionless light that fell upon the water.

As I went down to my boat, I saw the lovers standing on the beach gazing at the sea.

And as I rowed away rapidly I still distinguished their outline on the shore, their shadows erect side by side. They seemed to fill the bay, the night, the heavens with a symbolic grandeur, so widespread was the atmosphere of love they diffused around them.

And when I reached my yacht, I remained seated a long while on deck, overcome with sadness without knowing wherefore, filled with regrets without knowing why, unwilling even to decide on going down to my cabin, as though I would fain absorb a little more of the tenderness they had diffused around them. Suddenly one of the wnidows of the inn was lit up, and I saw their profiles on the bright background. Then my loneliness overpowered me, and in the balminess of the springlike night, at the soft sound of the waves on the sand, under the crescent moon shedding its rays over the sea, I felt in my heart such an intense desire to love that I was near crying out in my envious distress.

Then, all at once, I became ashamed of this weakness, and, unwilling to admit to myself that I was a man like another, I accused the moonshine of disturbing my reason.

I have, moreover, always believed that the moon exercises a mysterious influence on the human brain.

It fills poets with vagaries, rendering them delightful or ridiculous, and produces on lovers' affections the effect of Ruhmkorff's pile on electric cur-

rents. The man who loves in a normal manner in the sunlight adores with frenzy beneath the moon.

A youthful and charming woman maintained to me one day, I forget on what occasion, that moonstrokes are infinitely more dangerous than sunstrokes. They are caught, she said, unawares, out walking perchance on a beautiful night, and they are incurable; you remain mad; not raving mad, not mad enough to be shut up, but mad of a special madness, gentle, incurable; and you no longer think on any subject like other men.

I have certainly been moonstruck to-night, for I feel strangely unreasonable and lightheaded; and the little crescent moon in its downward course toward the sea affects me, melts me to tears, and rends my heart.

Wherein lies the power of seduction of this moon, aged dead planet that it is, rambling through the heavens with its yellow face and sad, ghostly light, that it should thus agitate us, beings whom even our vagabond thoughts disturb?

Do we love it because it is dead? as the poet Haraucourt says:

"Puis ce fut l'âge blond des tiédurs et des vents.
La lune se peupla de murmures vivants:
Elle eut des mers sans fond et des fleuves sans nombre,
Des troupeaux, des cités, des pleurs, des cris joyeux;
Elle eut l'amour; elle eut ses arts, ses lois, ses dieux,
Et lentement rentra dans l'ombre."

Do we love it because the poets, to whom we owe the eternal illusion that surrounds us in this world, have dimmed our sight by all the images they have seen in its pallid rays, have taught our over-excited sensibility to feel in a thousand different ways the soft and monotonous effects it sheds over the world?

When it rises behind the trees, when it pours forth its shimmering light on the flowing river, when it descends through the boughs on to the sand of the shaded alleys, when it mounts solitary in the black and empty sky, when it dips toward the sea, stretching out on the undulating surface of the waters a vast pathway of light, are we not haunted by all the charming verses with which it has inspired great dreamers?

If we wander forth by night in a joyous mood and see its full circle, round like a yellow eye, watching us, perched just over a roof, Musset's immortal ballad is recalled to our mind.

And is it not he, the mocking poet, who immediately presents it to us through his eyes?

"C'était dans la nuit, brune,
Sur le clocher jauni
La lune
Comme un point sur un I.

"Lune, quel esprit sombre
Promène au bout d'un fil,
Dans l'ombre,
Ta face ou ton profil?"

If we walk on some evening when we feel sad, on the beach by the ocean illuminated by its rays, do we not, in spite of ourselves, at once recite the two grand and melancholy lines:

"Seule au-dessus des mers, la lune voyageant
Laisse dans les flots noirs tomber ses pleurs d'argent."

If we awake, to find our bed lighted up by a long beam coming in at the window, do we not feel at once as though the white figure evoked by Catulle Mendès were descending upon us:

"Elle venait, avec un lis dans chaque main,
La pente d'un rayon lui servant de chemin."

If, in some evening walk in the country, we suddenly hear the long, sinister howl of a farm dog, are we not forcibly struck by the recollection of the admirable poem of Leconte de Lisle, "Les Hurleurs":

"Seule, la lune pâle, en écartant la nue,
Comme une morne lampe, oscillait tristement.
Monde muet, marqué d'un signe de colère,
Débris d'un globe mort au hasard dispersé,
Elle laissait tomber de son orbe glacé
Un reflet sépulcral sur l'océan polaire."

At the evening trysting place, one saunters slowly through the leafy path, with arm encircling the beloved one, pressing her hand, and kissing her brow. She is perhaps a little tired, a little agitated, and walks with lagging step.

A bench appears in sight, under the leaves bathed by the soft light, as by a calm shower.

In our hearts and minds, like an exquisite love-song, the two charming lines start up:

"Et réveiller, pour s'asseoir à sa place,
Le clair de lune endormi sur le banc!"

Can one see the lessening crescent, as on this evening, cast its fair profile on the vast sky spangled with stars, without thinking of the end of that masterpiece of Victor Hugo's which is called "Boaz Endormi":

. . . . . And Ruth, motionless,
Asked herself, as she opened her half-closed eye beneath her veil,
What God, what reaper of the eternal summer,
Had negligently thrown as he passed by
This golden sickle in the starry field.

And who has better described the moon, courteous and tender to all lovers, than Hugo:

Night fell, all was hushed; the torches died out
Under the darkening woods, the springs lamented.
The nightingale, hidden in its shady nest,
Sang like a poet and like a lover.
In the depths of the dark foliage all dispersed,
The madcaps laughing carried off the wise,
The fair one disappeared in the gloom with her lover,
And with the vague trouble of some dream
They felt by degrees intermingled with their souls,
With their secret thoughts, with their glances of flame,
With their hearts, their senses, with their yielding reason,
The blue moonlight that bathed the vast horizon.

And I remember also the admirable prayer to the moon which is the opening scene of the eleventh book of Apuleius' "Golden Ass."

Still, all the songs of mankind are not enough to fill our hearts with the sentimental sadness with which this poor planet inspires us.

We pity the moon, in spite of ourselves, without knowing the reason, and this is why we love it.

Our very affection for it is mingled with compassion; we feel pity for it as for an old maid, for we vaguely feel, the poets notwithstanding, that it is not a corpse, but a cold virgin.

Planets, like women, need a husband, and the poor moon, disdained by the sun, is nothing more nor less than an old maid, as we mortals say.

And it is for this reason that, with its timid light, it fills us with hopes that cannot be realized, and desires that cannot be fulfilled.

All that we vainly and dimly wait and hope for upon this earth works in our hearts like mysterious but powerless sap, beneath the pale rays of the moon. When we raise our eyes to it, we quiver with inexpressible tenderness and are thrilled by impossible dreams!

The narrow crescent, a mere thread of gold, now dipped its keen, gleaming point in the water, and gradually plunged gently and slowly till the other point, so delicate that I could not detect the moment of its vanishing, had also disappeared.

Then I raised my eyes toward the inn. The lighted window was closed. A dull melancholy crushed my heart, and I went below.

No sooner had I lain down than I felt sleep was impossible, and I remained lying on my back with my eyes closed, my thoughts on the alert, and all my nerves quivering. Not a motion, not a sound, near or far, nothing but the breathing of the two sailors through the thin bulkhead, could be heard.

Suddenly something grated. What was it? I know not. Some block in the rigging, no doubt; but the tone—tender, plaintive and mournful—of the sound sent a thrill through me; then nothing more. An infinite silence seemed to spread from the earth to the stars; nothing more—not a breath, not a shiver on the waters, not a vibration of the yacht, nothing; and then again the slight and unrecognizable moan recommenced. It seemed to me as I listened as though a jagged blade were sawing at my heart. Just as certain noises, certain notes, certain voices harrow us, and in one second pour into our soul all it can contain of sorrow, despair, and anguish. I listened expectantly, and heard it again, the identical sound, which now seemed to emanate from my own self—to be wrung from my nerves—or, rather, to resound within me in a secret, deep and desolate cry. Yes, it was a cruel though familiar voice, an expected voice that filled me with despair. It passed over me with its weird and

feeble tones as an uncanny thing sowing broadcast the appalling terrors of delirium, for it had power to awake the horrible anguish which lies slumbering in the inmost heart of every living man. What was it? It was the voice ringing with reproaches which tortures our soul, clamoring ceaselessly, obscure, painful, harassing; a voice, unappeasable and mysterious, which will not be ignored; ferocious in its reproaches for what we have done, as well as for what we have left undone; the voice of vague remorse, of useless regrets, of days gone by, of women unloved; of joys that were vain, and hopes that are dead; the voice of the past, of all that has disappointed us, has fled and disappeared forever, of what we have not attained, and never shall attain; the small still voice which ever proclaims the failure of our life, the uselessness of our efforts, the impotence of our minds, and the weakness of our flesh.

It spoke to me in that short whisper, recommencing after each dismal silence of the dark night; it spoke of all I would have loved, of all that I had vaguely desired, expected, dreamed of; all that I would have longed to see, to understand, to know, to taste, all that my insatiable, poor and weak spirit had gilded with a useless hope, all that toward which it had been tempted to soar, without being able to tear asunder the chains of ignorance that held it.

Ah! I have coveted all, and delighted in nothing. I should have required the vitality of a whole race, the varying intelligence, all the faculties, all the powers scattered among all beings, and thousands of existences in reserve; for I bear within myself every desire and every curiosity, and I am compelled to see all, and grasp nothing.

Whence, therefore, arises this suffering in the fact of living, since to the generality of men it only brings satisfaction? Wherefore this unknown torture which preys upon me? Why should I not know the reality of pleasure, expectation and possession?

It is because I carry within me that second sight which is at the same time the power and the despair of writers. I write because I understand and suffer with all that exists, because I know too well, and above all, because without being able to enjoy anything, I contemplate it inwardly in the mirror of my mind.

Let no one envy, but rather pity us, for it is in this that the literary man differs from his fellow creatures.

For him no simple feeling any longer exists. All he sees, his joys, his pleasures, his suffering, his despair, all instantaneously become subjects of observation. In spite of all, in spite of himself, he analyzes everything, hearts, faces, gestures, intonations. As soon as he has seen, whatever it may be, he must know the wherefore. He has not a spark of enthusiasm, not a cry, not a kiss that is spontaneous, not one instantaneous action done merely because it must be done, unconsciously, without reflection, without understanding, without noting it down afterward.

If he suffers, he notes down his suffering, and classes it in his memory; he says to himself as he leaves the cemetery where he has left the being he has loved most in the world: "It is curious what I felt; it was like an intoxication of pain, etc. . . ." And then he recalls all the details, the attitude of those about him, the discordant gestures of feigned

grief, the insincere faces, and a thousand little insignificant trifles, artistic details—the sign of the cross made by an old woman leading a child, a ray of light through a window, a dog that crossed the funeral procession, the effect of the hearse under the tall yew trees in the cemetery, the face of the undertaker and its muscular contractions, the strain of the four men who lowered the coffin into the grave, a thousand things in fact that a poor fellow suffering with all his heart, soul and strength would never have noticed.

He has seen all, noticed all, remembered all, in spite of himself, because he is, above all else, a literary man, and his intellect is constructed in such a manner that the reverberation in him is much more vivid, more natural, so to speak, than the first shock, the echo more sonorous than the original sound.

He seems to have two souls, one that notes, explains, comments on each sensation of its neighbor, the natural soul common to all men; and he lives condemned to be the mere reflection of himself or of others; condemned to look on, and see himself feel, act, love, think, suffer, and never be free like the rest of mankind, simply, genially, frankly, without analyzing his own soul after every joy and every sob.

If he converses, his words often wear the air of slander, and that only because he is clairvoyant, and cannot avoid analyzing the secret springs which regulate the feelings and actions of others.

If he writes, he cannot refrain from putting into his books all that he has seen, all he has gathered, all he knows; he makes no exception in favor of friends

or relations, but he pitilessly lays bare the hearts of those he loves or has loved, with a cruel impartiality—exaggerating even to make the effect more powerful—wholly absorbed by his work, and in no wise by his affections.

And if he loves, if he loves a woman, he will dissect her, as he would a corpse in a hospital. All she says, all she does, is instantly weighed in the delicate analytical scales which he carries within him, and is docketed according to its documentary importance. If, in an unpremeditated impulse, she throws herself on his neck, he will judge the action, according to its opportuneness, its fitness, its dramatic power, and will tacitly condemn it, if he feels it artificial or badly done.

Actor and spectator of himself and of others, he is never solely an actor, like the good folk who take life easily. Everything around him becomes transparent, hearts, deeds, secret intentions; and he suffers from a strange malady, a kind of duality of the mind, that makes of him a terribly vibrating and complicated piece of machinery, fatiguing even to himself.

Owing to his peculiarly morbid sensibility, he is no happier than one flayed alive, to whom nearly every sensation becomes a torture.

I can remember dark days, in which my heart was so lacerated by things I had only caught sight of for a second that the memory of those visions has remained within me like grievous wounds.

One morning, in the Avenue de l'Opéra, in the midst of a stirring and joyous crowd, intoxicated with the sunlight of the month of May, I suddenly caught sight of a creature, for whom one could find

no name, an old woman bent double, dressed in tatters that had been garments, with an old straw bonnet stripped of its former ornaments, the ribbons and flowers having disappeared in times immemorial. And she went by, dragging her feet along so painfully that I felt in my heart, as much as she did, more than she could, the aching pain of each of her steps. Two sticks supported her. She passed along without seeing any one, indifferent to all—to the noise, the crowd, the carriages and the sun! Where was she going? She carried something in a paper parcel hanging by a string. What was it? Bread? Yes, without a doubt. Nobody, no neighbor had been able or willing to do this errand for her, and she had undertaken herself the terrible journey from her garret to the baker. At least two hours must she spend, going and coming. And what a mournful struggle! Surely as fearful a road as that of Christ on His way to Calvary!

I raised my eyes toward the roofs of the tall houses. She was going up there! When would she get there? How many panting pauses on the steps, in the little stairway so black and winding?

Every one turned round to look at her! They murmured "Poor woman!" and passed on. Her skirt, her rag of a skirt, hardly holding to her dilapidated body, draggled on the pavement. And there was a mind there! A mind? No, but fearful, incessant, harassing suffering! Oh, the misery of the aged without bread, the aged without hope, without children, without money, with nothing before them but death; do we ever think of it? Do we ever think of the aged famished creatures in the garrets? Do

we think of the tears shed by those dimmed eyes, once bright, joyous, full of happy emotion?

Another time, it was raining, I was alone, shooting in the plains of Normandy, plodding through the deep-ploughed fields of greasy mud that melted and slipped under my feet. From time to time, a partridge surprised, hiding behind a clod of earth, flew off heavily through the downpour. The report of my gun, smothered by the sheet of water that fell from the skies, hardly sounded louder than the crack of a whip, and the gray bird fell, its feathers bespattered with blood.

I felt sad enough to weep, to weep like the showers that were pouring down on the world, and on me; my heart was filled with sadness and I was overcome with fatigue, so that I could hardly raise my feet, heavily coated as they were with the clay soil. I was returning home when I saw in the middle of the fields the doctor's gig following a cross-road.

The low black carriage was passing along, covered by its round hood and drawn by a brown horse, like an omen of death wandering through the country on this sinister day. Suddenly it pulled up, the doctor's head made its appearance, and he called out:

"Hullo there!"

I went toward him, and he said:

"Will you help me to nurse a case of diphtheria? I am all alone, and I want some one to hold the woman, while I take out the false membrane from her throat."

"I'll come with you," I replied, and I got into his carriage.

He told me the following story:

Diphtheria, terrible diphtheria that suffocates unhappy creatures, had made its appearance at poor Martinet's farm.

Both father and son had died at the beginning of the week. The mother and daughter were now in their turn dying.

A neighbor who was nursing them, feeling suddenly unwell, had taken flight the day before, leaving the door wide open, and abandoning the two sick people on their straw pallets, alone, without anything to drink, choking, suffocating, dying; alone, for the last twenty-four hours!

The doctor had cleaned out the mother's throat and made her swallow; but the child, maddened by pain and the anguish of suffocation, had buried and hidden its head in the straw bedding, absolutely refusing to allow itself to be touched.

The doctor, accustomed to such scenes, repeated in a sad and resigned voice:

"I cannot really spend all day with these patients. By Jove! these people do give one a heartache. When you think that they have remained twenty-four hours without drinking. The wind blew the rain in on their very beds. All the hens had taken shelter in the fireplace."

We reached the farm. The doctor fastened his horse to the bough of an apple tree before the door, and we went in. A strong smell of sickness and damp, of fever and moldiness, of hospital and cellar greeted our nostrils as we entered. In this gray and dismal house, fireless and without sign of life, it was bitterly cold; the swampy chill of a marsh. The clock had stopped; the rain fell down into the great fireplace, where the hens had scattered the

ashes, and we heard in a dark corner the noise of a pair of bellows, husky and rapid. It was the breathing of the child. The mother, stretched out in a kind of large wooden box, the peasant's bed, and covered with old rags and old clothes, seemed to rest quietly. She slightly turned her head toward us.

The doctor inquired:

"Have you got a candle?"

She answered in a low, distressing tone:

"In the cupboard."

He took the light, and led me to the farther end of the room toward the little girl's crib.

She lay gasping, with emaciated cheeks, glistening eyes, and tangled hair, a pitiable sight. At each breath deep hollows could be seen in her thin, strained neck. Stretched out on her back, she convulsively clutched with both hands the rags that covered her, and directly she caught sight of us, she turned her face away, and hid herself in the straw.

I took hold of her shoulders, and the doctor, forcing her to open her mouth, pulled out of her throat a long white strip of skin, which seemed to me as dry as a bit of leather.

Her breathing immediately became easier, and she drank a little. The mother, raising herself on her elbow, watched us. She stammered out:

"Is it done?"

"Yes, it's done."

"Are we going to be left all alone?"

A terror, a terrible terror shook her voice, the terror of solitude, of loneliness, of darkness, and of death that she felt so near to her.

I answered:

"No, my good woman, I will stay till the doctor sends you a nurse."

And, turning toward the doctor, I added:

"Send old Mother Mauduit; I will pay her."

"Very well, I'll send her at once."

He shook my hand and went out; and I heard his gig drive off, over the damp road.

I was left alone with the two dying creatures.

My dog Paf had lain down in front of the empty hearth, and this reminded me that a little fire would be good for us all. I therefore went out to seek for wood and straw, and soon a bright flame lit up the whole room, and the bed of the sick child, who was again gasping for breath.

I sat down and stretched out my legs in front of the fire.

The rain was beating against the window panes, the wind rattled over the roof. I heard the short, hard wheezing breath of the two women, and the breathing of my dog, who sighed with pleasure, curled up before the bright fireplace.

Life! life! what is it? These two unhappy creatures, who had always slept on straw, eaten black bread, suffered every kind of misery, were about to die! What had they done? The father was dead, the son was dead. The poor souls had always passed for honest folk, had been liked and esteemed as simple and worthy fellows!

I watched my steaming boots and my sleeping dog, and there arose within me, a shameful and sensuous contentment, as I compared my lot with that of these slaves.

The little girl seemed to choke, and suddenly the grating sound became an intolerable suffering to

me, lacerating me like a dagger, which at each stroke pierced my heart.

I went toward her:

"Will you drink?" I said.

She moved her head to say yes, and I poured a few drops of water down her throat, but she could not swallow them.

The mother, who was quieter, had turned round to look at her child; and all at once a feeling of dread took possession of me, a sinister dread that passed over me, like the touch of some invisible monster. Where was I? I no longer knew! Was I dreaming? What horrible nightmare was this?

Is it true that such things happen? that one dies like this? And I glanced into all the dark corners of the cottage, as though I expected to see crouching in some obscure angle a hideous, unmentionable, terrifying thing, the thing which lies in wait for the lives of men, and kills, devours, crushes, strangles them; the thing that delights in red blood, eyes glistening with fever, wrinkles and scars, white hair and decay.

The fire was dying out. I threw some more wood on it, and warmed my back, shuddering in every limb. At least, I hoped to die in a good room, with doctors around my bed and medicines on the tables! And these women had been all alone for twenty-four hours in this wretched hovel, without a fire, stretched on the straw with the death rattle in their throats! At last I heard the trot of a horse and the sounds of wheels; and the nurse came in coolly, pleased at finding some work to do, and showing little surprise at the sight of such misery.

I left her some money and fled with my dog; I

fled like a malefactor, running away in the rain; with the rattle of those two throats still ringing in my ears—running toward my warm home where my servants were awaiting me and preparing my good dinner.

But I shall never forget that scene, nor many other dreadful things, that make me loathe this world.

What would I not give at times to be allowed not to think, not to feel, to live like an animal in a warm, clear atmosphere, in a country mellow with golden light, devoid of the raw, crude tones of verdure, a country of the East where I might sleep without weariness, and wake without care, where restlessness is not anxiety, where love is free from torture, and existence is not a burden.

I should choose there a large square dwelling, like a huge box sparkling in the sun.

From the terrace I should look upon the sea and the white winglike pointed sails of the Greek and Turkish boats, as they flit to and fro. The outer walls have hardly any apertures. A large garden, with air heavily laden under the overshadowing palm trees, forms the centre of this Oriental home. Sprays of clear water shoot up under the trees, and fall back again with a slight splash, into a broad marble fountain sanded with golden dust. Here I should bathe constantly, between two pipes, two dreams, or two kisses.

I should have slaves, black and handsome, draped in light, airy clothing, noiselessly running hither and thither over the heavy carpets.

My walls should be soft and yielding, like the flesh of a woman, and on the divans encircling each

room numberless cushions of every shape would permit of my reposing in every conceivable attitude.

Then, when I should tire of my delicious repose, of my immobility, of my eternal day dream; satiated with the calm enjoyment of my own well-being, I would order a horse to be brought to my door—a horse, black or white, as fleet as a gazelle.

And I would spring to his back, and in a furious gallop, quaff the tingling, intoxicating air.

And I would speed like an arrow, over the glowing country which fills the eyes with the delight and the intoxication of wine.

In the calm of eve, I would course madly toward the vast horizon tinged rose color in the setting sun. Out there all becomes pink in the twilight: the sunburned mountains, the sand, the garments of the Arabs, the dromedaries, the horses, the tents! The rose-colored flamingoes fly upward from the marshes to the rose-colored sky, and I should scream with delight, plunged in the boundless infinite rosiness of all that surrounds me.

I shall no longer see black-coated men seated on uncomfortable chairs along the sidewalk, sipping absinthe and talking business amid the deafening roar of the vehicles as they roll along the streets.

I should ignore the state of the money market, political events, changes of ministry, all the useless frivolities on which we squander our short and vapid existence. Why should I undergo these worries, these sufferings, these struggles? I would rest sheltered from the wind in my bright and sumptuous dwelling.

The winged dream was floating before my closed eyelids and over my mind as it sank to rest; when I

heard my men stirring, lighting the lantern, and setting to work at some lengthy and silent task.

I called out to them:

"What on earth are you doing?"

Raymond replied in a hesitating voice:

"We are getting some lines ready, sir; for we thought that you would like to fish, if it was fine enough at sunrise."

Agay, during the summer, is the rendezvous of all the fishermen along the coast. Whole families come here, sleeping at the inn or in the boats, eating *bouillabaisse* on the beach, under the shade of the pine trees, the resin of which crackles in the sun.

I inquired:

"What o'clock is it?"

"Three o'clock, sir."

Then, without rising, I stretched out my arm, and opened the door that separated my room from the forecastle.

The two men were squatting in the low den, through which the mast passes in fitting into the carline; the plale was full of such varied and strange things, that one might take it for a haunt of thieves; in perfect order along the partitions, instruments of all kinds were suspended: saws, axes, marlinespikes, pieces of rigging, and saucepans; on the floor between the two berths a pail, a stove, a barrel with its copper hoops, glistening under the direct ray of light from the lantern which hangs between the anchor bitts, by the side of the cable tiers; and my men were busy, baiting the innumerable hooks hanging all along the trawling line.

"At what hour must I get up?" I asked.

"Why, now, sir, at once."

Half an hour after, we all three embarked on board the dingey, and left the *Bel-Ami* to go and spread our net at the foot of the Drammont, near the Ile d'Or.

Then when our line, some two or three hundred yards long, had sunk to the bottom, we baited three little deep-sea lines, and having anchored the boat by sinking a stone at the end of a rope, we began to fish.

It was already daylight, and I could distinctly see the coast of Saint-Raphaël, near the mouth of the Argens, and the sombre mountains of the Maures, themselves running out seaward as far as Cape Camarat, beyond the Gulf of Saint-Tropez.

Of all the southern coast, this is the spot I am fondest of. I love it as though I had been born there, as though I had grown up in it, because it is wild and glowing with color, and because the Parisian, the Englishman, the American, the man of fashion, and the adventurer have not yet poisoned it.

Suddenly the line I held in my hand quivered. I started, then felt nothing, and again a slight shock tightened the line wound round my finger, then another one, more violent, shook my whole hand, and with beating heart, I began to draw in the line, gently, eagerly, striving to peer through the transparent blue water, and soon I perceived in the shadow of the boat a white flash describing rapid circles.

The fish thus seen appeared to me enormous, and when on board it was no bigger than a sardine.

Then I caught many others, blue, red, yellow, green, glittering, silvery, striped, golden, speckled,

spotted, those pretty rock fish of the Mediterranean so varied, so colored, that seem painted to please the eye; then sea-urchins covered with prickles, and those hideous monsters of the sea, conger eels.

Nothing can be more amusing than the raising of a trawling line. What will come out of the sea? What surprise, what pleasure, or what disappointment at each hook pulled out of the water! What a thrill runs through one when from afar some large creature is perceived struggling, as it rises slowly toward us!

At ten o'clock we had returned on board the yacht, and the two men, beaming with delight, informed me that our take weighed twenty-three pounds.

I was, however, doomed to pay dearly for my sleepless night! A sick headache, the dreadful pain that racks in a way no torture could equal, shatters the head, drives one crazy, bewilders the ideas, and scatters the memory like dust before the wind; a sick headache had laid hold of me, and I was perforce obliged to lie down in my bunk with a bottle of ether under my nostrils.

After a few minutes I fancied I heard a vague murmur which soon became a kind of buzzing, and it seemed as if all the interior of my body became light, as light as air, as though it were melting into vapor.

Then followed a numbness of spirit, a drowsy, comfortable state, in spite of the persisting pain, which, however, ceased to be acute. It was now a pain which one could consent to bear, and not any longer the terrible tearing agony, against which the whole tortured body rises in protest.

Soon the strange and delightful sensation of vacuum I had in my chest extended and reached my limbs, which in their turn became light. light as though flesh and bone had melted away and skin only remained, just enough skin to permit of my feeling the sweetness of life and of enjoying my repose. Now I found that I no longer suffered. Pain had disappeared, melted, vanished into air. And I heard voices, four voices, two dialogues, without understanding the words. At times they were but indistinct sounds, at other times a word or two reached me. But I soon recognized that these were but the accentuated buzzing of my own ears. I was not sleeping; I was awake, I understood, I felt, I reasoned with a clearness, a penetration and power which were quite extraordinary, and a joyousness of spirit, a strange intoxication, produced by the tenfold acuteness of my mental faculties.

It was not a dream like that created by hashheesh nor the sickly visions produced by opium; it was a prodigious keenness of reasoning, a new manner of seeing, of judging, of estimating things and life, with the absolute consciousness, the certitude that this manner was the true one.

And the old simile of the Scriptures suddenly came back to my mind. It seemed to me that I had tasted of the tree of knowledge, that all mystery was unveiled, so strongly did I feel the power of this new, strange and irrefutable logic. And numberless arguments, reasonings, proofs rose up in my mind, to be, however, immediately upset by some proof, some reasoning, some argument yet more powerful. My brain had become a battlefield of ideas. I was a superior being, armed with an invincible intelligence,

and I enjoyed prodigious happiness in the sensation of my power.

This state lasted a long, long time. I still inhaled the fumes of my ether bottle. Suddenly I perceived that it was empty. And I again began to suffer.

For ten hours I endured this torture for which there is no remedy, then I fell asleep, and the next day, brisk as after convalescence, having written these few pages, I left for Saint-Raphaël.

CHAPTER IV

SAINT-RAPHAËL, *April 11th.*

On our way here the weather was delightful and a light breeze carried us over in six tacks. After rounding the Drammont, I caught sight of the villas of Saint-Raphaël hidden among the pine trees, among the little slender pines beaten all the year round by the everlasting gusts of wind from Fréjus. Then I passed between the Lions, pretty red rocks that seemed to guard the town, and I entered the port, which, choked up with sand at the farther end, obliges one to remain some fifty yards off the quay. I then went on land.

A large crowd was gathered in front of the church. Some one was being married. A priest was authorizing in Latin with pontifical gravity the solemn and comical act which so disturbs mankind, bringing with it so much mirth, suffering and tears. According to custom, the families had invited all their relatives and friends to the funeral service of a young girl's innocence, to listen to the piously inde-

corous ecclesiastical admonitions, preceding those of the mother, and to the public benediction, bestowed on that which is usually so carefully veiled.

And the whole countryside, full of broad jokes, moved by the greedy and idle curiosity that draws the common herd to such a scene, had come there to see how the bride and bridegroom would comport themselves. I mingled with the crowd and watched it.

Good heavens, how ugly human beings are! For at least the hundredth time I noticed, in the midst of this festive scene, that, of all races, the human race is the most hideous. The whole air was pervaded by the odor of the people, the nauseous, sickening odor of unclean bodies, greasy hair and garlic, that odor of garlic, exhaled by the people of the South, through nose, mouth and skin, just as roses spread abroad their perfume.

Men, of course, are always as ugly and always smell as obnoxious, but our eyes, accustomed to the sight of them, our nostrils used to their odor, fail to distinguish their ugliness and their emanations, unless we have been spared the sight and odor for some time.

Mankind is hideous! To obtain a gallery of grotesque figures, fit to raise a laugh from the dead, it would be sufficient to take the ten first-comers, set them in a line, and photograph them with their irregular heights, their legs either too long or too short, their bodies too fat or too thin, their red, pale, bearded, or smooth faces, their smirking or solemn looks.

Formerly, in primeval days, the wild man, the strong naked man, was certainly as handsome as the

horse, the stag or the lion. The exercise of his muscles, a life free from restraint, the constant use of his vigor and his agility kept up in him a grace of motion, which is the first condition of beauty, and an elegance of form, which is produced only by physical exercise. Later on the artistic nations, enamored of form, knew how to preserve this grace and this elegance in intelligent man by the artificial means of gymnastics. The care bestowed on the body, the trials of strength and suppleness, the use of ice-cold water and vapor baths made the Greeks true models of human beauty, and they have left us their statues to show us what were the bodies of these great artists.

But now, O Apollo! look at the human race moving about in its festive scenes. The children rickety from the cradle, deformed by premature study, stupefied by the school life that wears out the body at fifteen years of age and cramps the mind before it is formed, reach adolescence with limbs badly grown, badly jointed, in which all normal proportions have completely disappeared.

And let us contemplate the people in the street trotting along in their dirty clothing! As for the peasant! Good heavens! Let us go and watch the peasant in the fields, his gnarled, knotted frame, lanky, twisted, bent, more hideous than the barbarous types exhibited in a museum of anthropology.

In comparison how splendid are those men of bronze, the negroes; in shape, if not in face; how elegant, both in their movements and their figure, the tall, lithe Arabs.

I have, however, another reason—my horror of crowds. I cannot go into a theatre, nor be present

at any public entertainment. I at once experience a curious and unbearable feeling of discomfort, a horrible unnerving sensation, as though I were struggling with all my might against a mysterious and irresistible influence. And, in truth, I struggle with the spirit of the mob, which strives to take possession of me.

How often have I observed that the intelligence expands and grows loftier when we live alone, and that it contracts and deteriorates when we again mix with other men. The contact, the opinions floating in the air, all that is said, all that one is compelled to listen to, to hear, to answer, acts upon the mind. A flow and ebb of ideas goes from head to head, from house to house, from street to street, from town to town, from nation to nation, and a level is established, an average of intellect is created, by all large agglomerations of individuals.

The inherent qualities of intellectual initiative, of free will, of wise reflection, and even of sagacity, belonging to any individual being, generally disappear the moment that being is brought in contact with a large number of other human beings.

The following is a passage from a letter of Lord Chesterfield to his son (1751) which sets forth with rare humility the sudden elimination of all active qualities of the mind in every large body of people:

"Lord Macclesfield, who had the greatest share in drawing up the bill, and who is one of the greatest mathematicians and astronomers in Europe, debated with a profound knowledge of the subject, and all the clearness that so intricate a matter would admit of, but as his words, his sentences, and his delivery were not equal in any way to my own, the prefer-

ence was most unanimously, though most unjustly, given to me.

"This will ever be the case; every numerous assembly is a *mob*, let the individuals who compose it be what they will. Mere reason and good sense is never to be talked to a mob; their passions, their sentiments, their senses, and their apparent interests must alone be appealed to.

"Collectively, they have no intelligence, etc. . . ."

This deep observation of Lord Chesterfield's, a remark, however, that has often been made, and noted with interest by philosophers of the scientific school, constitutes one of the most serious arguments against representative government.

The same phenomenon, a surprising one, is produced each time a large number of men are gathered together. All these persons, side by side, distinct from each other, of different minds, intelligences, passions, education, beliefs, and prejudices, become suddenly, by the sole fact of their being assembled together, a special being, endowed with a new soul, a new manner of thinking in common, which is the unanalyzable resultant of the average of these individual opinions.

It is a crowd, and that crowd is a person, one vast collective individual, as distinct from any other mob as one man is distinct from any other man.

A popular saying asserts that "the mob does not reason." Now why does not the mob reason, since each particular individual in the crowd does reason? Why should a crowd do spontaneously what none of the units of the crowd would have done? Why has a crowd irresistible impulses, ferocious wills, stupid

enthusiasms that nothing can arrest, and, carried away by these thoughtless impulses, why does it commit acts that none of the individuals composing it would commit alone?

Someone screams, and behold! a sort of frenzy takes possession of all; and all, with the same impulse, which no one tries to resist, carried away by the same thought, which instantaneously becomes common to all, notwithstanding different castes, opinions, beliefs and customs, will fall upon a man, murder him, drown him, without a motive, almost without a pretext, whereas each one of them, had he been alone, would have precipitated himself, at the risk of his life, to save the man he is now killing.

And in the evening, each one on returning home will ask himself what passion, or what madness, had seized him, and thrown his nature and his temperament out of its ordinary groove; how he could have given way to this savage impulse.

The fact is, he had ceased to be a man, to become one of a crowd. His personal will had become blended with the common will, as a drop of water is blended with a river and is lost in it.

His personality had disappeared, had become an infinitesimal particle of one vast and strange personality, that of the crowd. The panics which take hold of an army, the storms of opinion which carry away an entire nation, the frenzy of dervish dances, are striking examples of this identical phenomenon.

In short, it is not more surprising to see an agglomeration of individuals make one whole, than to see molecules that are placed near each other form one body.

To this mysterious attraction must without doubt

be attributed the peculiar temperament of theatre audiences, and the strange difference of judgment that exists between the audience at a general rehearsal and that of a first-night audience, and again between a first-night audience and that of the succeeding performances, and the change in the impression produced, from one evening to another; and the errors of judgment that condemn a play like "Carmen," which, later on, turns out an immense success.

What I say about crowds must be applied to all society, and he who would carefully preserve the absolute integrity of his thought, the proud independence of his opinion, and look at life, humanity, and the universe as an impartial observer free from prejudice, preconceived belief and fear, must live absolutely apart from all social relations; for human stupidity is so contagious that he will be unable to associate with his fellow creatures, even see them, or listen to them, without being, in spite of himself, influenced on all sides by their conversations, their ideas, their superstitions, their traditions, their prejudices, which, through their customs, laws and surprisingly hypocritical and cowardly code of morality, will surely contaminate him.

Those who strive to resist these lowering and incessant influences struggle in vain amid petty, irresistible, innumerable and almost imperceptible fetters; and through sheer fatigue soon cease to fight.

A stir here took place in the crowd; the newly married couple were coming out. And immediately I followed the general example, raised myself on tiptoe to see—and longed to see—with a stupid, low, repugnant longing, the longing of the common herd.

The curiosity of my neighbors had intoxicated me; I was one of a crowd.

To fill up the remainder of the day I decided on taking a row in my dingey up the Argens. This lovely and almost unknown river separates the plains of Fréjus from the wild mountain range of the Maures.

I took Raymond, who rowed me along the side of the low beach to the mouth of the river, which we found impracticable and partly filled up with sand. One channel alone communicated with the sea; but was so rapid, so full of foam, of eddies, and of whirlpools, that we were unable to ascend it.

We were therefore obliged to drag the boat to land, and carry it over the sand hills to a kind of beautiful lake formed by the Argens at this spot.

In the midst of a green and marshy country, of that rich green tint peculiar to trees growing in the water, the river flows between two banks, so covered with verdure, and with such high, impenetrable foliage, that the neighboring mountains are barely visible. It winds along, pursuing its course unperceived amid the calm, lonely and magnificent country, and looks like a peaceful lake.

As in the low northern plains, where the springs ooze out beneath one's feet, running over and vivifying the earth like blood, the clear, cold blood of the soil, so here we find again the same strange sensation of exuberant nature which floats over all damp countries.

Birds, with long legs dangling as they fly, spring up from among the reeds, stretching their pointed beaks heavenward; while others, broad-winged and slow, pass from one bank to another with heavy

flight, and others, smaller and more rapid, skim along the surface of the river, darting forward like rebounding pebbles. Innumerable turtle doves cooing on the heights, or wheeling about, fly from tree to tree, and seem to exchange messages of love. One feels that all around this deep water, throughout all this plain, up to the foot of the mountains, there is yet more water; the treacherous water of the marsh, sleeping yet living; broad clear sheets, in which the skies are mirrored, over which the clouds flit by; in which, widely scattered, all manner of strange rushes spring up; the fertile limpid water, full of rotting life and deadly fermentation; water breeding fever and miasma, a food and a poison at the same time, spreading itself out in attractive loveliness over the mysterious mass of putrefaction beneath it. The atmosphere is delightful, relaxing, and dangerous. On all the banks which separate the vast still pools, amid all the thick grasses, swarm, crawl, jump, and creep a whole world of slimy, repugnant, cold-blooded animals. I love those cold, gliding animals that are generally avoided and dreaded; for me there is something sacred about them.

At the hour of sunset the marsh intoxicates and excites me. After having been all day a great silent pond lying hushed in the heat, it becomes at the moment of twilight a fairy-like and enchanted country. In its calm and boundless depths the skies are mirrored: skies of gold, skies of blood, skies of fire; they sink in it, bathe in it, float and are drowned in it. They are there up above, in the immensity of the firmament, and they are there below, beneath us, so near and yet so completely beyond our touch, in

that shallow pool, through which the pointed grasses push their way like bristling hairs. All the color with which earth has been endowed, charming, varied and enthralling, appears to us deliciously painted, admirably resplendent, and infinitely shaded around a single leaf of the water-lily. Every shade of red, rose, yellow, blue, green and violet is there, in a little patch of water which shows us the heavens, and space, and dreamland, and the flight of the birds as they skim across its face; and then there is still something else—I know not what—in the marshes at sunset. I feel, as it were, a confused revelation of some unknown mystery, the original breath of primeval life, which was perhaps nothing more than a bubble of gas rising from a swamp at the close of day.

CHAPTER V

SAINT-TROPEZ, *April 12th.*

We left Saint-Raphaël at about eight o'clock this morning, with a strong northwest breeze.

The sea in the gulf, though it had no waves, was white with foam, white like a mass of soapsuds, for the wind, the terrible wind from Fréjus which blows almost every morning, seemed to throw itself on the water, as though it would tear it to pieces, raising a rolling mass of little waves of froth, scattered one moment, re-formed the next.

The people at the port having assured us that this squall would fall toward eleven o'clock, we decided upon starting with three reefs in, and the storm jib.

The dingey was placed on board at the foot of the mast, and the *Bel-Ami* seemed to fly directly it left the jetty. Although it carried scarcely any sail, I had never felt it dash along like this. It seemed to scarcely touch the water, and one would never have suspected that it carried at the bottom of its large keel, two and a half yards deep, a slab of lead weighing over thirty hundredweight, besides thirty-eight hundredweight of ballast in its hold, besides all we had on board in the shape of rigging, anchors, cables and furniture.

I had soon crossed the bay, at the farther end of which the Argens flows into the sea; and as soon as I was under shelter of the coast the breeze calmed down. It is there that the splendid, sombre and wild region begins which is still called the land of the Moors. It is a long peninsula, composed of mountains, with a contour of coasts over sixty miles long.

Saint-Tropez, situated at the entry of the lovely gulf, formerly called Gulf of Grimaud, is the capital of the little Saracen kingdom, of which nearly every village, built on the summit of a peak in order to secure it from attack, is still full of Moorish houses with arcades, narrow windows, and inner courtyards, wherein tall palm trees have grown up, and are now higher than the roofs.

If one penetrates on foot into the unknown valleys of this strange group of mountains, one discovers an incredibly wild country, devoid of roads and lanes; without even footpaths, without hamlets, without houses.

At intervals, after seven or eight hours' walking, appears a hovel, often abandoned, or sometimes in-

habited by a poverty-stricken family of charcoal burners.

The Monts des Maures have, it appears, a geological formation peculiar to themselves, a matchless flora said to be the most varied in Europe, and immense forests of pine, chestnut and cork trees.

Some three years ago I made an excursion into the very heart of the country, to the ruins of the Chartreuse de la Verne, and have retained an ineffaceable recollection of it. If it is fine to-morrow I shall return there.

A new road follows the sea, going from Saint-Raphaël to Saint-Tropez. All along this magnificent avenue, opened up through the forest by the side of a matchless beach, new winter resorts are being started. The first one planned is called Saint-Aigulf.

This bears a peculiar stamp. In the midst of a forest of fir trees stretching down to the sea, wide roads are laid out in every direction. There is not a house, nothing but the barely indicated plan of the streets, running through the trees. Here are the squares, the cross-roads, and the boulevards. The names are even written upon metal tablets: Boulevard Ruysdaël, Boulevard Rubens, Boulevard Van Dyck, Boulevard Claude Lorrain. One asks: Why the names of all these painters? Why, indeed? Simply because the *Company* has decided, like God before He lit the sun: "This shall be an artists' resort!"

The *Company!* The rest of the world does not know all this world contains of hopes, dangers, money gained, and money lost on the Mediterranean

shores! The *Company!* Fatal and mysterious word, deep and deceiving!

In this instance, however, the *Company* seems to have realized its expectations, for it has already found purchasers, and of the best, among artists. At various places one reads: "Building lot bought by M. Carolus Duran; another by M. Clairin, another by Mlle. Croizette," etc. Nevertheless—who can tell? The Mediterranean Companies are not in luck just now. Nothing is more ludicrous than this fury of speculation, which generally ends in terrible failures. Whosoever has gained ten thousand francs on a piece of land at once buys ten million francs' worth of land at twenty sous the metre, in order to sell it again at twenty francs the metre. Boulevards are laid out, water pipes put in, gas works established, and the purchaser is hopefully expected.

The purchaser does not make his appearance, but, instead of him—ruin.

Far off, ahead of me, I perceive the towers and the buoys that mark the breakers on both sides at the opening of the Gulf of Saint-Tropez.

The first tower is called "Tour des Sardinaux," and marks a regular shoal of rocks, level with the top of the water, some of which just show the tips of their brown heads; the second one has been christened "Balise de la Sèche à l'huile" (buoy of the oily cuttle-fish).

We now reach the entrance of the gulf, which extends back between two ridges of mountains and forests as far as the village of Grimaud, built at the very extremity, on a height. The ancient castle of Grimaldi, a tall ruin that overlooks the village, ap-

pears in the distant haze like the evocation of some fairy scene.

The wind has fallen. The gulf looks like an immense calm lake, into which, taking advantage of the last puffs of the squall, we slowly make our way.

To the right of the channel, Sainte-Maxime, a little white port, is mirrored in the water, which reflects the houses topsy-turvy, and reproduces them as distinctly as on shore. Opposite, Saint-Tropez appears, guarded by an old fort.

At seven o'clock *Bel-Ami* anchored by the quay, at the side of the little steamboat which carries on the service with Saint-Raphaël. The only means of communication between this isolated little port and the rest of the world is by this *Lion de Mer*, an old pleasure yacht, which runs in connection with a venerable diligence that carries the letters and travels at night by the one road which crosses the mountains.

This is one of those charming and simple daughters of the sea, one of those nice modest little towns that has grown out of the water like a shell, feeds upon fish and sea air and breeds sailors. On the jetty stands a bronze statue of the Bailli de Suffren.

The pervading odor is of fish and smoking tar, of brine and hulls of vessels. The stones in the streets glitter like pearls, with the scales of the sardines, and along the walls of the port a population of lame and paralyzed old sailors bask in the sun on the stone benches. From time to time they talk of past voyages, and of those they have known in bygone days, the grandfathers of the small boys running yonder. Their hands and faces are wrinkled, tanned,

browned, dried by the wind, by fatigue, by the spray, by the heat of the tropics and by the icy cold of northern seas, for they have seen, in their roamings over the ocean, the ins and outs of the world, every aspect of the earth and of all latitudes. In front of them, propped up on a stick, passes and repasses the old captain of the merchant service, who formerly commanded the *Trois-Sœurs*, or the *Deux-Amis*, or the *Marie-Louise*, or the *Jeune-Clémentine*.

All salute him, like soldiers answering the roll-call, with a litany of "Good-day, captain," modulated in many tones.

This is a true land of the sea, a brave little town, briny and courageous, which fought in days of yore against the Saracens, against the Duc d'Anjou, against the wild corsairs, against the Connétable de Bourbon, and Charles Quint, and the Duc de Savoie, and the Duc d'Épernon. In 1637 the inhabitants, ancestors of these peaceful citizens, without any assistance, repelled the Spanish fleet, and every year they give with surprising realism a representation of the attack and their defence, filling the town with noisy bustle and clamor, strangely recalling the great popular festivities of the middle ages.

In 1813 the town likewise repulsed an English flotilla that had been sent against it.

Now it is a fishing town, and the produce of its fisheries supplies the greater part of the coast with tunny, sardines, red snappers, rock lobsters and all the pretty fish of this blue sea.

On setting foot on the quay, after having dressed myself, I heard twelve o'clock strike, and I perceived two old clerks, notary or lawyers' clerks, going off to their midday meal, like two old beasts of burden,

unbridled for a few minutes while they eat their oats at the bottom of a nosebag.

Oh, liberty, liberty! Our sole happiness, sole hope, sole dream! Of all the miserable creatures, of all classes of individuals, of all orders of workers, of all the men who daily fight the hard battle of life, these are the most to be pitied; on these does Fortune bestow the fewest of her favors.

No one believes this—no one knows it. They are powerless to complain; they cannot revolt; they remain gagged and bound in their misery, the shame-faced misery of quill-drivers.

They have gone through a course of study, they understand law, they have taken a degree, perhaps.

How dearly I like that dedication by Jules Vallès:

"To all those who, nourished upon Greek and Latin, have died of starvation."

And what do they earn, these starvelings? Eight to fifteen hundred francs a year!

Clerks in gloomy chambers, or clerks in office, you should read every morning over the door of your fatal prison Dante's famous phrase:

"Abandon hope, all ye who enter here!"

They are but twenty when they first enter and will remain till sixty or longer. During this long period not an event takes place! Their whole life slips away in the dark little bureau, ever the same, its walls lined with green portfolios. They enter young, in the full vigor of hope; they leave in old age, when death is at hand. All the harvest of recollections that we gather in a lifetime, the unexpected events, our loves—gentle or tragic memories—our adventures, all the incidents of a free existence, are unknown to these convicts.

The days, the weeks, the months, the seasons, the years, all are alike. They begin the day's work at the same hour; at the same hour they breakfast; at the same hour they leave; and this goes on for sixty or seventy years. Four accidents only constitute landmarks in their existence: marriage, the birth of the first-born, the death of father and that of the mother. Nothing else; stop, though—yes, a rise in salary. They know nothing of ordinary life, nothing of the world! Unknown to them are the days of cheerful sunshine in the streets and idle wanderings through the fields, for they are never released before the appointed hour. They become voluntary prisoners at eight o'clock in the morning and at six the prison doors are opened for them, when night is at hand. But, as a compensation, they have, for a whole fortnight in the year, the right—a right indeed much discussed, hardly bargained for and grudgingly granted—to remain shut up in their lodgings. For where can they go without money?

The builder climbs skyward; the driver prowls about the streets; the railway mechanic traverses woods, mountains, plains, moves incessantly from the walls of the town to the vast blue horizon of the sea. The employee never quits his bureau, his living coffin, and in the same little mirror wherein he saw himself a young fellow with fair mustache, on the day of his arrival, he contemplates himself bald and white-bearded on the day of his dismissal. Then all is finished, life is played out, the future closed. How can he have reached this point? How can one have grown old without any event having occurred, without having been startled by any of the surprises

of existence? It is so, nevertheless. He must now make way for the young, for the young beginners!

Then the unfortunate mortal steals away, more wretched than before, and dies almost immediately from the sudden snapping of the long and obstinate habit of his daily routine, the dreary routine of the same movements, the same actions, the same tasks at the same hours.

As I went into the hotel for breakfast, an alarmingly big package of letters and papers was handed to me, and my heart sank as at the prospect of some misfortune. I have a fear and a hatred of letters; they are bonds. Those little squares of paper bearing my name seem to give out a noise of chains as I tear them open—of chains linking me to living creatures I know or have known.

Each one inquires, although written by different hands: "Where are you? What are you doing? Why disappear in this way, without telling us where you are going? With whom are you hiding?" Another adds: "How can you expect people to care for you if you run away in this fashion from your friends? It is positively wounding to their feelings."

Well, then, don't attach yourselves to me! Will no one endeavor to understand affection without joining thereto a notion of possession and despotism? It would seem as if social ties could not exist without entailing obligations, susceptibilities and a certain amount of subserviency. From the moment one has smiled upon the attentions of a stranger, this stranger has a hold upon you, is inquisitive about your movements and reproaches you with neglecting him. If we get as far as friendship, each one imagines himself to have certain claims; intercourse

becomes a duty, and the bonds which unite us seem to end in slip-knots which draw tighter. This affectionate solicitude, this suspicious, tyrannous, clinging jealousy on the part of beings who have met casually, and who fancy themselves linked together because they have proved to be mutually agreeable, arises solely from the harassing fear of solitude which haunts mankind upon this earth.

Each of us, feeling the void around him, the unfathomable depth in which his heart beats, his thoughts struggle, wanders on like a madman, with open arms and eager lips, seeking some other being to embrace. And embrace he does, to the right, to the left, at haphazard, without knowing, without looking, without understanding—that he may not feel alone. He seems to say, from the moment he has shaken hands, "Now, you belong to me a little. You owe me some part of yourself, of your life, of your thoughts, of your time." And that is why so many people believe themselves to be friends who know nothing whatever of each other, so many start off hand in hand, heart to heart, without having really had one good look at one another. They must care for some one, in order not to be alone, their affection must be expended in friendship or in love, but some vent must be found for it incessantly. And they talk of affection, swear it, become enthusiastic over it, pour their whole heart into some unknown heart found only the evening before, all their soul into some chance soul with a face that has pleased. And from this haste to become united arise all the surprises, mistakes, misunderstandings and dramas of life.

Just as we remain lonely and alone, notwithstand-

ing all our efforts, so in like manner we remain free, notwithstanding all our ties.

No one ever belongs to another. Half unconsciously we lend ourselves to the comedy—coquettish or passionate—of possession, but no one really gives himself—his ego—to another human being. Man, exasperated by this imperious need to be the master of some one, instituted tyranny, slavery and marriage. He can kill, torture, imprison, but the human will inevitably escapes him, even when it has for a few moments consented to submission.

Do mothers even own their children? Does not the tiny being but just entered into the world set to work to cry for what he wants, to announce his separate existence and proclaim his independence?

Does a woman ever really belong to you? Do you know what she thinks, whether, even, she really adores you? You kiss her sweet body, waste your whole soul on her perfect lips; a word from your mouth or from hers—one single word—is enough to open between you a gulf of implacable hatred!

All sentiments of affection lose their charm when they become authoritative. Because it gives me pleasure to see and talk with some one, does it follow that I should be permitted to know what he does and what he likes? The bustle of towns, both great and small, of all classes of society, the mischievous, envious, evil-speaking, calumniating curiosity, the incessant watchfulness of the affections and conduct of others, of their gossip and their scandals—are they not all born of that pretension we have to control the conduct of others, as if we all belonged to each other in varying degrees? And we do in fact imagine that we have some rights over them, and

on their life, for we would fain model it upon our own; on their thoughts, for we expect them to be of the same style as our own; on their opinions, in which we will not tolerate any difference from ours; on their reputation, for we expect it to conform to our principles; on their habits, for we swell with indignation when they are not according to our notions of morality.

I was breakfasting at the end of a long table in the Hotel Bailli de Suffren, and still occupied with the perusal of my letters and papers, when I was disturbed by the noisy conversation of some half-dozen men, seated at the other end.

They were commercial travellers. They talked on every subject with assurance, with contempt, in a bragging, authoritative manner, and they gave me the clearest understanding of what constitutes the true French spirit; that is to say, the average of the intelligence, logic, sense and wit of France. One of them, a big fellow with a shock of red hair, wore a military medal and also one for saving a life—a fine fellow. Another, a fat little roundabout, made puns without ceasing, and laughed till his sides ached at his own jokes before the others had time to understand them. Another man, with close-cut hair, was reorganizing the army and the magistracy, reforming the laws and the constitution, planning an ideal republic to suit his own views as a traveller in the wine trade. Two others, side by side, were amusing each other thoroughly with the narrative of their *bonnes fortunes*, incidents in back parlors of shops and conquests of servant girls.

And in them I saw France personified, the witty, versatile, brave and gallant France of tradition.

These men were types of the race, vulgar types, it is true, but which have but to be poetized a little to find in them the Frenchman such as history—that lying and imaginative old dame—shows him to us.

And ours is really an amusing race, by reason of certain very special qualities, which one finds absolutely nowhere else.

First and foremost comes our versatility, which so agreeably diversifies both our customs and institutions. It is this which makes the history of our country resemble some surprising tale of adventure in a *feuilleton*, the pages of which "to be continued in the next number" are full of the most unexpected events, tragic, comic, terrible, grotesque. One may be angry or indignant over it, according to one's way of thinking, but it is none the less certain that no history in the world is more amusing and more sitrring than ours.

From the pure art point of view—and why should one not admit this special and disinterested point of view in politics as well as in literature?—it remains without a rival. What can be more strange and more surprising than the events which have taken place only in the last century?

What will to-morrow bring forth? This expectation of the unforeseen is, after all, very charming. Everything is possible in France, even the most wildly improbable drolleries and the most tragic adventures.

What could surprise us? When a country has produced a Joan of Arc and a Napoleon, it may well be considered miraculous soil.

And then, the French love women; they love them

dearly, with passion and with delicacy, with intelligence and with respect.

Our gallantry cannot be compared to anything in any other country.

He who has preserved in his heart the spark of gallantry of later centuries surrounds women with a tenderness at once profound, gentle, sensitive and vigilant. He loves everything that belongs to them, everything that comes from them, everything that they are, everything they do. He loves their toilet, their knickknacks, their adornments, their artifices, their naïvetés, their little perfidies, their lies and their dainty ways. He loves them all, rich as well as poor, the young and even the old, the dark, the fair, the fat, the thin. He feels himself at his ease with them and among them. He could remain with them indefinitely, without fatigue, without ennui, happy in the mere fact of their presence.

He knows, from the very first word, how to show them by a look, by a smile that he adores them, to arouse their attention, to increase their desire to please, to display for his benefit all their powers of seduction. Between them and him there is established at once a quick sympathy, a fellowship of instincts, almost a relationship through similarity of character and nature.

Then begins between them and him a combat of coquetry and gallantry, a mysterious and antagonistic sort of friendship is cemented, and an unseen affinity of heart and mind is formed.

He knows how to say what will please them, how to make them understand what he thinks; how to make known, without ever shocking them, without offending their delicate and watchful modesty, the

discreet yet ardent admiration always burning in his eyes, always trembling on his lips, always alight in his veins. He is their friend and their slave, the humble servitor of their caprices and the admirer of their persons. He is ever at their beck and call, ready to help them, to defend them, as though they were secret allies. He would love to devote himself to them, not only to those he knows slightly, but to those he does not know, those he has never even seen.

He asks nothing of them but a little pretty affection, a little confidence or a little interest, a little graciousness or even disloyal trickery.

He loves the woman who passes by in the street and whose glance falls upon him. He loves the young girl with hair streaming down her shoulders, a blue bow on her head, a flower in her bosom, who moves with slow or hurried step, timid or bold eye, through the throng on the pavement. He loves the unknown ones he elbows, the little shopwoman who dreams on her doorstep, the fine lady who lazily reclines in her open carriage.

From the moment he finds himself face to face with a woman, his heart is stirred and his best powers are awakened. He thinks of her, talks for her, tries to please her and to let her understand that she pleases him. Tender expressions rise to his lips, his glance is a caress; he is filled with a longing to kiss her hand, to touch even the material of her dress. For him it is women who adorn the world and make life seductive.

He likes to sit at their feet for the mere pleasure of being there; he likes to meet their eye, merely to catch a glimps of their veiled and fleeting thoughts;

he likes to listen to their voice solely because it is the voice of woman.

It is by them and for them that the Frenchman has learned to converse and to display the ready wit which distinguishes him.

To converse—what is it? It is the art of never seeming wearisome, of knowing how to invest every trifle with interest, to interest, no matter what be the subject, to fascinate with absolutely nothing.

How can one describe the airy, butterfly touch of an epigram, that game of battledore and shuttlecock with supple words, that running fire of wit, that dainty flitting of ideas that should all go to make up conversation!

The Frenchman is the only being in the world who has this subtle spirit of wit, and he alone thoroughly enjoys and comprehends it.

He has the wit that is evanescent and the wit that endures, the wit of the streets and the wit of literature.

That which endures is wit in the largest sense of the word, that vast breath of irony or mirth which has animated the nation from the moment it could think or speak; it is the pungent raciness of Montaigne and Rabelais, the irony of Voltaire, of Beaumarchais, of Saint-Simon and the inextinguishable laughter of Molière.

The brilliant sally, the neat epigram is the small coin of this wit. And, nevertheless, it is one aspect of it, a characteristic peculiarity of our national intelligence. It is one of its keenest charms. It is this that makes the sceptical gaiety of Paris life, the cheerful freedom of our manners and customs. It is part and parcel of our social amenity.

Formerly these amusing witticisms were in verse; nowadays they appear in prose. They are called, according to the period, epigrams, *bon-mots*, traits, hits, *gauloiseries*. They are current in town and drawing-room, they spring up everywhere, on the boulevard as well as in Montmartre. And those of Montmartre are often just as good as those of the boulevard; they are printed in the papers; from one end of France to the other they excite laughter. For the French know how to laugh.

Why should one saying more than another, the unexpected, quaint juxtaposition of two terms, two ideas, or even two sounds, a ridiculous pun, some unexpected cock-and-bull story, open the floodgates of our mirth, causing explosions of laughter, like a blast fit to blow up all Paris and the provinces?

Why do all the French laugh, while all the English and the Germans can see no reason for our mirth? Why? Solely and wholly because they are French, because they possess the French wit and the delightful, enviable gift of laughter.

With them, moreover, a little wit is all that is necessary for a ruler.

Good humor takes the place of genius; a witty saying consecrates a man at once and makes him great for all posterity. The rest matters little. The nation loves those who amuse it and forgives everything to those who can make it laugh.

A single glance over the past history of France will make us understand that the fame of their great men has only been made by flashes of wit. The most detestable princes have become popular through amusing jokes, repeated and remembered from century to century.

The throne of France is maintained by the cap and bells of the jester.

Epigrams, nothing but epigrams, ironic or heroic, polished or coarse—epigrams float forever on the surface of their history and make it like nothing so much as a collection of puns and witticisms.

Clovis, the Christian king, cried on hearing the story of the Passion:

"Why was I not there with my Franks?" This prince, in order to reign alone, massacred his allies and his relatives and committed every crime imaginable. Nevertheless he is looked upon as a pious and progressive monarch.

"Why was I not there with my Franks?"

We should know nothing of good King Dagobert if the rhyme had not apprised us of a few particulars, no doubt erroneous, of his existence.

Pepin, wishing to remove King Childeric from the throne, proposed to Pope Zacharias the following insidious question:

"Which of the two is the more worthy to reign, he who worthily fulfills all the kingly functions without the title or he who bears the title without knowing how to reign?"

What do we know of Louis VI.? Nothing! Pardon me. In the battle of Brenneville, when an Englishman laid hands upon him, crying, "The king is taken," this truly French monarch replied, "Do you know, knave, that a king can never be taken, even at chess?"

Louis IX., saint though he was, has not left a single good saying to remember him by. In consequence his reign appears to the French a wearisome episode, full of orisons and penances.

That noodle, Philip VI., beaten and wounded at the battle of Crécy, cried as he knocked at the gates of the castle of Arbroie: "Open! It is the fortune of France!" They are still grateful to him for this melodramatic speech. John II., made prisoner by the Prince of Waltes, remarks with chivalrous good will and the graceful gallantry of a French troubadour: "I had counted upon entertaining you at supper to-night, but fortune wills otherwise and ordains that I should sup with you."

It would be impossible to bear adversity more gracefully.

"It is not for the King of France to avenge the quarrels of the Duke of Orleans" was the generous declaration of Louis XII. And it is, truly, a kingly saying, one worthy of the remembrance of all princes.

That harebrained fellow, Francis I., more apt at the pursuit of the fair sex than at the conduct of a campaign, has saved his reputation and surrounded his name with an imperishable halo by writing to his mother those few superb words after the defeat of Pavia: "All is lost, madame, save honor."

Does not that phrase remain to this day as good as a victory? Has it not made this prince more illustrious than the conquest of a kingdom? We have forgotten the names of the greater number of the famous battles fought in these long bygone days, but shall we ever forget "All is lost save honor"?

Henry IV.! Hats off, gentlemen! Here is the master! Sly, sceptical, tricky, deceitful beyond belief, artful beyond compare, a drunkard, debauchee, unbeliever, he managed by a few happy and pointed sayings to make for himself in history an admirable

reputation as a chivalrous, generous king, a brave, loyal and honest man.

Oh, the knave! Well did he know how to play upon human stupidity!

"Hang yourself, brave Crillon; we have gained the day without you."

After a speech like this, a general is always ready to be hanged or killed for his master's sake.

At the opening of the famous battle of Ivry: "Children, if the colors fall, rally to my white plume; you will find it always on the path of honor and victory."

How could a man fail to be victorious who knew how to speak thus to his captains and his troops?

This sceptical monarch wishes for Paris, he longs for it, but he must choose between his faith and the beautiful city. "Enough," he mutters; "after all, Paris is well worth a mass!" And he changes his religion as he would have changed his coat. Is it not a fact, however, that the witticism caused a ready acceptance of the deed? "Paris is well worth a mass" raised a laugh among the choicer spirits and there was no violent indignation at his seizure of it.

Did he not become the patron saint of all fathers of families by the question put to the Spanish ambassador who found him playing at horses with the dauphin: "Are you a father, M. l'Ambassadeur?"

The Spaniard replied: "Yes, sir."

"In that case," said the king, "I will go on playing."

But he made a conquest for all eternity of the heart of France, of the *bourgeoisie* and of the people by the finest phrase that prince ever pronounced—a

real inspiration of genius, full of depth, good humor, shrewdness and good sense.

"If God prolongs my life, I hope to see in my kingdom no peasant so poor that he cannot put a fowl in the pot for his Sunday's dinner."

It is with words such as these that enthusiastic and simple crowds are flattered and governed. By a couple of clever sayings Henry IV. has drawn his own portrait for posterity. One cannot pronounce his name without at once having a vision of the white plume and of the delicious flavor of a *poule-au-pot*.

Louis XIII. made no epigrams. This dull king had a dull reign.

Louis XIV. created the formula of absolute personal power: "The State is myself."

He gave the measure of royal pride in its fullest expansion: "I have almost had to wait."

He set the example of sonorous political phrases which make alliances between two nations: "The Pyrenees exist no longer!"

All his reign is in these few phrases.

Louis XV., most corrupt of kings, elegant and witty, has bequeathed to posterity that delightful keynote of his supreme indifference: "After me, the deluge."

If Louis XVI. had been inspired enough to perpetrate one witticism, he might possibly have saved his kingdom. With one epigram might he not have escaped the guillotine?

Napoleon I. scattered around him by handfuls the sayings that were suited to the hearts of his soldiers.

Napoleon III. extinguished with one brief phrase all the future indignation of the French nation in

that first promise: "The Empire is peace." The Empire is peace! Superb declaration, magnificent lie! After having said that, he might declare war against the whole of Europe without having anything to fear from his people. He had found a simple, neat and striking formula, capable of appealing to all minds, and against which facts would be no argument.

He made war against China, Mexico, Russia, Austria, against all the world. What did it matter? There are people yet who speak with sincere conviction of the eighteen years of tranquillity he gave to France: "The Empire is peace."

And it was also with his keen words of satire, phrases more mortal than bullets, that M. Rochefort laid the Empire low, riddling it with the arrows of his wit, cutting it to shreds and tatters.

The Maréchal MacMahon himself has left as a souvenir of his rise to power: "Here I am, here I remain!" And it was by a shaft from Gambetta that he was, in his turn, knocked down: "Submission or dismissal."

With these two words, more powerful than a revolution, more formidable than the barricades, more invincible than an army, more redoubtable than all the votes, the tribune turned out the soldier, crushed his glory and destroyed his power and prestige.

As to those who govern France at this moment, they must fall, for they are devoid of wit; they will fall, for in the day of danger, in the day of disturbance, in the inevitable moment of seesaw, they will not be capable of making France laugh and of disarming her.

Of all these historical pharses, there are not ten

really authentic. But what does it matter, so long as they are believed to have been uttered by those to whom they are attributed?

"In the land of hunchbacks
One must be a hunchback,
Or at least appear so."

says the popular song.

Meanwhile the commercial travellers were talking of the emancipation of women, of their rights and the new position they longed to occupy in society.

Some approved, others were annoyed; the little fat man jested without ceasing and ended the breakfast, as well as the discussion, by the following entertaining anecdote:

"Lately," said he, "there was a great meeting in England, where this question was discussed. One of the orators had been setting forth numerous arguments in favor of the women's cause, and wound up with this observation:

"'To conclude, gentlemen, I may observe that the difference between man and woman is, after all, very small.'

"A powerful voice, from an enthusiastic and thoroughly convinced listener, arose from the audience, crying: 'Hurrah for the small difference!'"

CHAPTER VI

SAINT-TROPEZ, *April 13th.*

As it was remarkably fine this morning I started for the Chartreuse de la Verne.

Two recollections draw me toward this ruin, that of the sensation of infinite solitude and the unforget-

table melancholy of the deserted cloister, and that of an old peasant couple to whose cottage I had been taken the year before by a friend who was guiding me across this country of the Moors.

Seated in a country cart, for the road soon became impracticable for a vehicle on springs, I followed the line of the bay to its deepest point. I could see upon the opposite shore the pine woods where the *Company* is attempting to create another winter resort. The shore is indeed exquisite, and the whole country magnificent. Then the road goes through the mountains, and soon crosses the town of Cogolin. A little farther on I left it and took a rough, uneven road which was scarcely more than a long ditch. A river, or rather a big stream, runs by the side, and every hundred yards or so cuts through it, floods it, wanders away a little, returns, loses itself again, leaves its bed and drowns the track, then falls into a ditch, strays through a field of stones, appears suddenly to calm down into wisdom, and for a while follows its proper course; but seized all at once by some wild fancy, it precipitates itself again into the road, and changes it into a marsh, in which the horse sinks up to the neck and the high vehicle up to the driver's seat.

There are no more houses, only from time to time a charcoal burner's hut; the poorest live in absolute holes. Is it not almost incredible that men should inhabit holes in the ground, where they live all the year, cutting wood and burning it to extract the charcoal, eating bread and onions, drinking water, and sleeping like rabbits in their burrows, in narrow caverns hewn in the granite rocks? Lately, too, in the midst of these unexplored valleys, a her-

mit has been discovered, a real hermit, hidden there for these thirty years, unknown to any one, even to the forest rangers.

The existence of this wild man, revealed by I know not whom, was, no doubt, mentioned to the driver of the diligence, who spoke of it to the postmaster, who talked of it to the telegraph clerk, male or female, who flew with the wonder to the editor of some little local paper, who made out of it a sensational paragraph, copied into all the newspapers of Provence.

The police set to work to hunt out the hermit, without apparently causing him any alarm, whence we may conclude that he had kept all needful papers by him. But a photographer, excited by the news, set off in his turn, wandered three days and three nights among the mountains, and ended by photographing some one—the real hermit some say; an impostor, others will tell you.

Last year, then, the friend who first revealed to me this strangely quaint country showed me two creatures infinitely more curious than the poor devil who had come to bury in these impenetrable woods a grief, a remorse, an incurable despair, or perhaps simply the mere ennui of living.

This is how he first discovered them. Wandering on horseback among these valleys, he suddenly came across a prosperous farm—vines, fields, and a farmhouse which looked comfortable though humble.

He entered. He was received by a woman, a peasant, about seventy years old. The husband, seated under a tree, rose and came forward to bow.

"He is deaf," she said.

He was a fine old fellow of eighty, amazingly

strong, upright, and handsome. They had for servants a laborer and a farm girl. My friend, a little surprised to meet these singular persons in the midst of a desert, inquired about them. They had been there for a long time; they were much respected, and passed for being comfortably off—that is, for peasants.

He came back several times to visit them, and little by little became the confidant of the wife. He brought her papers and books, being surprised to find that she had some ideas, or, rather, remains of ideas, which scarcely seemed those of her class. She was, however, neither well read, intelligent, nor witty; but there seemed to be, in the depths of her memory, traces of forgotten thoughts, a slumbering recollection of a bygone education. One day she asked him his name.

"I am the Count de X——," he said.

Moved by the secret pride which lies hidden in the depths of all souls, she replied:

"I, too, am noble."

Then she went on, speaking assuredly for the first time in her life of this incident of former days, unknown to any one.

"I am the daughter of a colonel. My husband was a non-commissioned officer in my father's regiment. I fell in love with him, and we ran away together."

"And you came here?"

"Yes, we hid ourselves."

"And you have never seen your family since?"

"Oh, no! Don't you see, my husband was a deserter."

"You have never written to any one?"

"Oh, no!"

"And you have never heard any one speak of your family, of your father or mother?"

"Oh, no; mamma was dead."

This woman had preserved a certain childishness, the simplicity of those who throw themselves into love as they would over a precipice.

He asked again:

"You have never told this to any one?"

She answered: "Oh, no! I can say it now, because Maurice is deaf. As long as he could hear, I should not have dared to mention it. Besides, I have never seen any one but peasants since I ran away."

"At least, then, you have been happy?"

"Oh, yes, very happy. I have been very happy. I have never regretted anything."

I also had been to visit this woman, this couple, the previous year, as one goes to gaze at some miraculous relic.

I had looked with surprise, sadness, and even a little disgust, at the woman who had followed this man, this rustic Adonis, attracted by his uniform of a mounted hussar, and who had continued to see him, beneath his peasant's rags, with the blue dolman slung over his back, his sword at his side, and his high boots with clanking spurs.

She had, however, become a peasant herself. In the depths of this wilderness she had become perfectly accustomed to this life without luxuries, without charm or delicacy of any sort; she had adapted herself to these simple manners. And she loved him still. She had become a woman of the people, in cap and coarse petticoat. Seated on a straw-bot-

tomed chair at a wooden table, she ate a mess of cabbage, potatoes and bacon from an earthenware plate. She slept on a straw mattress beside him.

She had never thought of anything but him! She had regretted neither ornaments, nor silks, nor elegance, nor soft chairs, nor the perfumed warmth of well-curtained rooms nor repose in a comfortable bed. She had never needed anything but him! As long as he was there, she had wanted nothing else!

She was quite young when she abandoned life, the world, and those who had brought her up and loved her. Alone with him she had come to this wild ravine. And he had been everything to her, everything that one longs for, dreams of, expects and hopes for. He had filled her life with happiness from beginning to end. She could not have been happier.

Now I was going to see her again, for the second time, filled with the surprise and the vague contempt with which she inspired me.

She lived near the Hyères road, on the opposite slope of the mountain on which stands the Chartreuse de la Verne; and another carriage was awaiting me on this road, for the deep track we had followed had now ceased and become a mere footpath, only accessible to pedestrians and mules.

I started, therefore, alone, on foot, and with slow steps to climb the mountains. I was in a delightful wood, a real Corsican thicket, a fairy-tale wood composed of flowering creepers, aromatic plants with a powerful fragrance, and huge, magnificent trees.

The granite fragments in the path sparkled as they rolled beneath my steps, and in the openings between the branches I saw sudden peeps of wide,

gloomy valleys full of verdure, winding lengthily away to the distance.

I was warm. The quick blood flowed within my flesh. I felt it coursing through my veins, burning, rapid, alert, rhythmical and alluring as a song; the great, joyous animal song of life that breathes and moves in the sunlight. I was happy, I was strong. I quickened my pace, climbed the rocks, ran, jumped, and discovered every minute a larger view, a more gigantic network of desert valleys, from whence not one single chimney sent up a wreath of smoke.

I climbed to the summit, overtopped by other heights, and after walking in various directions I saw on the side of the mountain opposite me, beyond an immense chestnut wood, a black ruin, a mass of stones and old buildings supported by lofty arcades. To reach it I had to go round a ravine and cross the wood. The trees, old as the abbey itself, enormous, mutilated, and dying, had survived the building. Some have fallen, no longer able to sustain the weight of years; others, beheaded, have now only a hollow trunk in which ten men could conceal themselves. And they look like a formidable army of giants, who, in spite of age and thunderbolts, are ready still to attempt the assault of the skies. In this fantastic wood one feels the moldy touch of centuries, the old, old life of the rotting roots, amid which, at the feet of these colossal stumps, nothing can grow. For among the gray trunks the ground is of hard stones, and a blade of grass is rare.

Here are two covered springs or fountains, kept as drinking places for the cows.

I approach the abbey, and discover all the old

buildings, the most ancient of which date back to the twelfth century; while the more recent are inhabited by a family of cowherds.

In the first court one sees by the tracks of animals that a remnant of life still haunts the spot; then, after traversing crumbling and tumbling halls, like those of all ruins, one reaches the cloister, a long covered walk around a square of brambles and tall grasses. In no spot in the world have I felt such a weight of melancholy press upon my heart as in this ancient and sinister cloister, the pacing court of monks. Certainly the forms of the arcades and the proportions of the place contribute to my emotion, to my heartache, and sadden my soul by their action on my eyes, exactly as the happy curve of some cheering bit of architecture would rejoice them. The man who built this retreat must have been filled with despair to imagine such a desolate, dreary promenade. One would fain weep and groan within these walls; one longs to suffer, to reopen all the wounds of one's heart, to enlarge and make the very utmost of all the sorrows compressed within it.

I climbed upon a breach in the wall, to see the view outside, and I understood my emotion. Nothing around us but death. Behind the abbey, a mountain ascending to the sky, around it the chestnut grove, in front of it, a valley, and beyond that more valleys—and pines, pines, an ocean of pines, and on the far horizon pines still, on the mountain tops.

And I left the place.

I crossed next a wood of cork trees, where, a year ago, I had experienced a shock of strong and moving surprise.

It was a gray October day, at the time when they

strip the bark of these trees, to make corks of it. They strip them thus from the foot to the first branches, and the denuded trunk becomes red, a blood red, as of a flayed limb. They have grotesque and twisted forms and look like maimed creatures writhing in epileptic fits, and I suddenly fancied myself transported into a forest of tormented beings, a bleeding and Dantesque forest of hell, where men had roots, where bodies deformed by torture resembled trees, where life ebbed incessantly, in never-ending torment, through these bleeding wounds, which produced upon me that weakness of the nerves and faintness that always affect me at the sudden sight of blood or the unexpected shock of a man crushed or fallen from a roof. And this emotion was so keen, this sensation so vivid, that I imagined I heard distracting cries and moans, distant and innumerable. I touched one of these trees, to reassure my fainting spirit, and I fancied I beheld my hand, as I drew it back, covered with blood.

To-day they are cured—till the next barking.

At length I perceive the road that passes near the farm which has sheltered the long happiness of the non-commissioned officer of hussars and the colonel's daughter.

From afar I recognize the old man walking among the vines. So much the better; the wife will be alone in the house.

The servant was washing, in front of the door.

"Your mistress is here?" I said.

She replied, with a singular look, in the accent of the South:

"No, sir; it is six months since she is no more."

"She is dead?"

"Yes, sir."

"And of what?"

The woman hesitated, then muttered:

"She is dead—dead, I tell you."

"But of what?"

"Of a fall, then!"

"A fall! Where from?"

"From the window."

I gave her a few sous.

"Tell me about it," I said.

No doubt she was very eager to talk of it; no doubt, too, she had often repeated the story for the last six months, for she told it at great length, like a well-known and unvarying tale.

Then I learned that for thirty years the old, dear man had had a mistress in the neighboring village, and that his wife, having learned this by chance from a passing carter who spoke of it without knowing who she was, rushed breathless and distracted to the attic, and there hurled herself from the window; not, perhaps, with deliberate purpose, but beside herself with grief at her discovery, which goaded her forward irresistibly, like a whip lashing and cutting. She had flown up the staircase, burst open the door, and without knowing, without being able to stop her headlong speed, had continued to run straight ahead and had leaped into empty space.

He had known nothing of it; he did not know even now; he would never know, because he was deaf. His wife was dead, that was all. All the world must die some time or other!

I could see him at a distance, giving orders by signs to his laborers.

Then I caught sight of the carriage which was waiting for me in the shade of a tree, and I returned to Saint-Tropez.

CHAPTER VII

April 14th.

I was going to bed last evening, although it was only nine o'clock, when a telegram was handed to me. One of my dearest friends sent me this message: "I am at Monte Carlo for four days, and have been telegraphing to you to every port on the coast. Come to me at once."

And behold, the wish to see him, the longing to talk, to laugh, to gossip about society, about things, about people; the longing to slander, to criticise, to blame, to judge, to chatter, was alight within me in a moment, like a conflagration. That very morning, even, I should have been furious at this recall, yet in the evening I was enchanted at it. I wished myself already there, with the great dining-room of the restaurant full of people before my eyes, and in my ears that murmur of voices in which the numbers of the roulette table dominate all other phrases like the *Dominus vobiscum* of the church services.

I called Bernard.

"We shall start at about four o'clock in the morning for Monaco," I said to him.

He replied philosophically:

"If it is fine, sir."

"It *will* be fine."

"The barometer is going down, though."

"Pooh! it will go up again."

The mariner smiled an incredulous smile.

I went to bed and to sleep.

It was I who woke the men. It was dark and a few clouds hid the sky. The barometer had gone down still more.

The two men shook their heads with a distrustful air.

I repeated:

"Pooh! It will be fine. Come, let us be off!"

Bernard said:

"When I can see the open, I know what I am about; but here in this harbor, at the end of this gulf, one knows nothing, sir; one can see nothing. There might be a fearful sea on without our knowing anything about it."

I replied:

"The barometer has gone down, therefore we shall not have an east wind. Now, if we have a west wind, we can put into Agay, which is only six or seven miles off." The men did not seem much reassured; however, they got ready to start.

"Shall we take the dingey on deck?" asked Bernard.

"No; you will see it will be quite fine. Let it tow astern, as usual."

A quarter of an hour later we had left the harbor and were running through the entrance of the gulf, driven along by a light, intermittent breeze.

I laughed.

"Well, you see the weather is good enough."

Soon we had passed the black and white tower built upon the Rabiou shoal, and although sheltered by Cape Camarat, which runs far out into the open sea, and of which the flashing light appeared from

minute to minute, the *Bel-Ami* was already lifted forward by long, powerful, slow waves; those hills of water which move on, one behind the other, without noise, without shock, without foam, menacing without fury, alarming in their very tranquillity.

One saw nothing, one only felt the rising and falling of the yacht on the dark, moving waters.

Bernard said:

"There has been a gale out at sea to-night, sir; we shall be lucky if we get in without accident."

The day broke clear above the restless mass of waves, and we all three looked anxiously seaward to see if the squall were not increasing.

All this time the boat was flying along with the wind and the tide. Already Agay appeared on our beam, and we held counsel whether we should make for Cannes, to escape the rough weather, or for Nice, running to seaward of the isles.

Bernard would have preferred Cannes, but as the breeze did not freshen, I decided in favor of Nice.

For three hours all went well, though the poor little yacht rolled like a cork in the frightful swell.

No one unacquainted with the open sea, that sea of mountains rolling along swiftly and heavily, separated by valleys which change place from second to second, filling up and forming again incessantly, can guess, can imagine the mysterious, redoubtable, terrifying and superb force of the waves.

Our little dingey followed far behind us, at the end of forty yards of hawser, through this liquid and tossing chaos. We lost sight of it every moment, then suddenly it would reappear, perched on the summit of a wave, floating along like a great white bird.

Here is Cannes in the depth of its bay, Saint-Honorat with its tower standing up among the waves, and before us the Cap d'Antibes.

The breeze freshened little by little and the crests of the waves became flocks of sheep, those snowy sheep which move so fast, and of which the countless troop careers along without dog or shepherd beneath the endless sky.

Bernard said to me:

"It will be all we can do to make Antibes."

And, indeed, seas began to break over us with inexpressible and violent noise. Sharp squalls struck us, throwing us into yawning gulfs, whence we emerged, righting ourselves with terrible shocks.

The gaff was lowered, but at every vibration of the yacht the boom touched the waves and seemed ready to tear away the mast, which, if it should fly away with the sail, would leave us floating alone and lost upon the wild waves.

Bernard cried out:

"The dingey, sir!"

I turned to look. A huge wave filled it, rolled it over, enveloped it in foam as if it would devour it, and, breaking the hawser by which it was made fast to us, took possession of it, half sinking, drowned; a conquered prey which it will presently throw upon the rocks down there below the headland.

The minutes seem hours. Nothing can be done. We must go on, round the point in front of us, and when we have done that we shall be sheltered and in safety.

At last we reach it. The sea is now calm and smooth, protected as it is by the long tongue of rocks and earth which forms the Cape of Antibes.

There is the harbor from which we started only a few days ago, although it seems to me we have been voyaging for months, and we enter just as noon is striking.

The men are radiant on finding themselves back again, though Bernard repeats at every other moment:

"Ah, sir, our poor little boat! It went to my heart to see it go down like that!"

As for me, I took the four o'clock train to go and dine with my friend in the principality of Monaco.

I wish I had time to write at length about this remarkable state, smaller than many a village in France, but wherein one may find an absolute sovereign, bishops, an army of Jesuits and *seminarists* more numerous than the army of the ruler, an artillery the guns of which are nearly all rifled, an etiquette more ceremonious than that of his lamented majesty Louis XIV., a royal prerogative more despotic than that of William of Prussia, joined to a magnificent toleration for the vices of humanity, on which, indeed, sovereign, bishops, Jesuits, *seminarists*, ministers, army, magistrates, every one, in short, exists.

Hail to this great pacific monarch, who, without fear of invasion or revolution, reigns peacefully over his happy little flock of subjects, in the midst of court ceremonies which preserve intact the traditions of the four curtsies, the twenty-six hand-kissings and all the forms in use once upon a time at the court of great rulers.

This monarch, moreover, is neither sanguinary nor vindictive, and when he banishes any one, as he

does sometimes, the measure is put in force with the utmost delicacy.

Is a proof needful?

A persistent player, on a day of ill luck, insulted the sovereign. A decree was issued for his expulsion.

During a whole month he prowled around the forbidden paradise, fearing the sword blade of the archangel in the guise of the sabre of the policeman. One day, however, he hardened his heart, crossed the frontier, reached the very centre of the kingdom in thirty seconds and penetrated into the precincts of the Casino. But suddenly an official stopped him.

"Are you not banished, sir?"

"Yes, sir; but I leave by the next train."

"Oh, in that case it is all right. You can go in."

And every week he came back, and each time the same functionary asked him the same question, to which he invariably gave the same answer.

Could justice be more gentle?

Within the last few years, however, a very serious and novel case occurred within the kingdom.

This was an assassination.

A man, a native of Monaco, not one of the wandering strangers of whom one meets legions on these shores—a husband, in a moment of anger, killed his wife, killed her without rhyme or reason, without any excuse that could be accepted.

Indignation was unanimous throughout the principality.

The supreme court met to judge this exceptional case—a murder had never taken place before—and the wretch was, with one voice, condemned to death.

The indignant sovereign ratified the sentence.

There only remained to execute the criminal. Then arose a difficulty. The country possessed neither guillotine nor executioner.

What was to be done? By the advice of the Minister of Foreign Affairs the prince opened negotiations with France to obtain the loan of a headsman and his apparatus.

Long deliberations took place in the ministry at Paris. At last they replied by sending an estimate of the cost of moving the woodwork and the practitioner. The whole amounted to sixteen thousand francs.

The monarch of Monaco reflected that the operation would cost him dear; the assassin was certainly not worth that price. Sixteen thousand francs for the head of a wretch like that? Never!

The same request was addressed to the Italian Government. A king and a brother would, no doubt, show himself less exacting than a republic.

The Italian Government sent in a bill which amounted to twelve thousand francs.

Twelve thousand francs! It would be necessary to impose a new tax, a tax of two francs a head! This would be enough to cause serious and hitherto unknown trouble in the state.

Then they bethought them of having the villain beheaded by a simple soldier. But the general, on being consulted, replied hesistatingly that perhaps his men had scarcely sufficient practice to acquit themselves satisfactorily of a task which undoubtedly demanded great experience in the handling of the sword.

Then the prince again assembled the supreme court and submitted to it this embarrassing case.

They deliberated long, without finding any practical way out of the difficulty. At last the first president proposed to commute the sentence of death to that of lifelong imprisonment, and the measure was adopted.

But they did not own a prison. It was necessary to fit one up, and a jailer was appointed who took charge of the prisoner.

For six months all went well. The captive slept all day on a straw mattress in the nook arranged for him, and his guardian lazily reclined upon a chair before the door, while he watched the passersby.

The prince, however, is economical—extravagance is not his greatest fault—and he has accurate accounts laid before him of the smallest expenses of his state—the list of them is not a long one. They handed him, therefore, the bill of expenses incurred in the creation of this new function, the cost of the prison, the prisoner and the watchman. The salary of this last was a heavy burden on the budget of the sovereign.

At first he merely made a wry face over it, but when he reflected that this might go on forever—the prisoner was young—he requested his Minister of Justice to take measures to suppress the expense.

The minister consulted the President of the Tribunal, and the two agreed to suppress the expense of a jailer. The prisoner, thus invited to guard himself, could not fail to escape, which would solve the question to the satisfaction of all parties.

The jailer was therefore restored to his family, and it became the duty of a scullion from the palace kitchen to carry to the prisoner his morning and

evening meals. But the captive made no attempt to recover his liberty.

Finally one day, as they had neglected to furnish him with food, they beheld him tranquilly appear at the palace to claim it: and from that day forward it became his habit to come at meal times to the palace, to eat with the servants, whose friend he became, and to thus save the cook the trouble of the walk to and fro.

After breakfast he would take a turn as far as Monte Carlo. He sometimes went into the Casino to venture a five-franc piece on the green cloth. When he had won, he gave himself a good dinner at one of the most fashionable hotels; then he returned to his prison, carefully locking his door on the inside.

He never slept away a single night.

The situation became a little puzzling, not for the convict, but for the judges.

The court assembled afresh, and it was decided that they should invite the criminal to leave the State of Monaco.

When this decision was announced to him he simply replied:

"You are pleased to be facetious. Well, and what would become of me in that case? I have no longer any means of subsistence. I have no longer a family. What would you have me do? I was condemned to death. You did not choose to execute me. I made no complaint. I was afterward condemned to imprisonment for life and placed in the hands of a jailer. You took away my guardian. Again I made no complaint.

"Now, to-day, you want to turn me out of the

country. Not if I know it. I am a prisoner, your prisoner, judged and condemned by you. I am faithfully fulfilling my sentence. I remain here."

The supreme court was nonplussed. The prince was in a terrible rage and ordered fresh measures to be taken.

Deliberations were resumed.

Then, at last, they decided to offer the culprit a pension of six hundred francs if he would leave the state and live elsewhere.

He accepted.

He has rented a little plot five minutes' walk from the kingdom of his former sovereign and lives happily upon his property, cultivating a few vegetables and despising all potentates.

However, the court of Monaco has profited, though a little late, by this experience, and has made a treaty with the French Government by which they send their convicts over to France, who keeps them out of sight in consideration of a modest compensation.

In the judicial archives of the principality one is shown the decree which settles the pension by which the rascal was induced to leave the State of Monaco.

Opposite the palace rises the rival establishment, the Roulette. There is, however, no hatred, no hostility between them, for the latter supports the former, which in return protects it. Admirable example; unique instance of two neighboring and powerful families living in peace in one tiny state, an example well calculated to efface the remembrance of the Capulets and the Montagues. Here the house of the sovereign, there the gambling house, the old

and the new society fraternizing to the sound of gold.

The halls of the Casino are as freely open to strangers as those of the prince are difficult of access.

I turn to the first.

A noise of money, continuous as that of the waves—a noise at once deep, light and terrible—fills the ears from the moment one enters, then fills the soul, stirs the heart, troubles the mind and bewilders thought. Everywhere this sound, this singing, crying, calling, tempting, rending sound.

Around the tables a motley crowd of players, the scum of every continent and of every society, mixed with princes or future kings, women of fashion, *bourgeois,* money lenders, disreputable women; a mixture, unique in the world, of men of all races, of all castes, of all kinds, of every origin; a perfect museum of adventurers from Russia, Brazil, Chili, Italy, Spain, Germany; of old women with reticules, of disreputable young ones carrying on their wrist little purses containing keys, a handkerchief and the three last five-franc pieces which are kept for the green cloth when the vein of luck shall chance to return.

I approached the first table and saw a pale face, with lined forehead and hard-set lips, features contracted and with a bad expression—the young woman of Agay Bay, the beautiful sweetheart of the sunny wood and the moonlit bay. He, too, is there, seated before her, his hand resting on a few napoleons.

"Play on the first square," said she.

He inquired anxiously:

"All?"

"Yes, all."

He placed the coins in a little heap.

The croupier turned the wheel. The ball ran, danced and stopped.

"Nothing further counts," jerks forth the voice, which resumes after a moment:

"Twenty-eight."

The young woman started and in a hard, sharp tone said:

"Come away."

He rose, and, without looking at her, followed her: and one felt that some dreadful thing had sprung up between them.

Some one remarked:

"Good-by to love. They don't look as if they were of one mind to-day."

A hand taps me on the shoulder. I turn round. It is my friend.

I have now only to ask pardon for having thus trespassed on my reader by talking so much of myself. I had written this journal of day dreams entirely for myself, or, rather, I had taken advantage of my floating solitude to capture the wandering ideas which are wont to traverse our minds, like birds on the wing.

But I am asked to publish these few pages, which, unconnected, deficient in composition and in art, follow one after the other without a reason and abruptly conclude without a motive, simply because a squall of wind put an end to my voyage.

I have yielded to this request. Perhaps I am wrong.

SIMON'S PAPA

NOON had just struck. The school door opened and the youngsters darted out, jostling each other in their haste to get out quickly. But instead of promptly dispersing and going home to dinner as usual, they stopped a few paces off, broke up into knots, and began whispering.

The fact was that, that morning, Simon, the son of La Blanchotte, had, for the first time, attended school.

They had all of them in their families heard talk of La Blanchotte; and, although in public she was welcome enough, the mothers among themselves treated her with a somewhat disdainful compassion, which the children had imitated without in the least knowing why.

As for Simon himself, they did not know him, for he never went out, and did not run about with them in the streets of the village, or along the banks of the river. And they did not care for him; so it was with a certain delight, mingled with considerable astonishment, that they met and repeated to each other what had been said by a lad of fourteen or fifteen who appeared to know all about it, so sagaciously did he wink. "You know—Simon—well, he has no papa."

Just then La Blanchotte's son appeared in the doorway of the school.

SIMON'S PAPA

He was seven or eight years old, rather pale, very neat, with a timid and almost awkward manner.

He was starting home to his mother's house when the groups of his schoolmates, whispering and watching him with the mischievous and heartless eyes of children bent upon playing a nasty trick, gradually closed in around him and ended by surrounding him altogether. There he stood in their midst, surprised and embarrassed, not understanding what they were going to do with him. But the lad who had brought the news, puffed up with the success he had met with already, demanded:

"What is your name, you?"

He answered: "Simon."

"Simon what?" retorted the other.

The child, altogether bewildered, repeated: "Simon."

The lad shouted at him: "One is named Simon something—that is not a name—Simon indeed."

The child, on the brink of tears, replied for the third time:

"My name is Simon."

The urchins began to laugh. The triumphant tormentor cried: "You can see plainly that he has no papa."

A deep silence ensued. The children were dumfounded by this extraordinary, impossible, monstrous thing—a boy who had not a papa; they looked upon him as a phenomenon, an unnatural being, and they felt that hitherto inexplicable contempt of their mothers for La Blanchotte growing upon them. As for Simon, he had leaned against a tree to avoid falling, and he remained as if prostrated by an irreparable disaster. He sought to explain, but could

think of nothing to say to refute this horrible charge that he had no papa. At last he shouted at them quite recklessly: "Yes, I have one."

"Where is he?" demanded the boy.

Simon was silent, he did not know. The children roared, tremendously excited; and those country boys, little more than aimals, experienced that cruel craving which prompts the fowls of a farmyard to destroy one of their number as soon as it is wounded. Simon suddenly espied a little neighbor, the son of a widow, whom he had seen, as he himself was to be seen, always alone with his mother.

"And no more have you," he said; "no more have you a papa."

"Yes," replied the other, "I have one."

"Where is he?" rejoined Simon.

"He is dead," declared the brat, with superb dignity; "he is in the cemetery, is my papa."

A murmur of approval rose among the little wretches as if this fact of possessing a papa dead in a cemetery had caused their comrade to grow big enough to crush the other one who had no papa at all. And these boys, whose fathers were for the most part bad men, drunkards, thieves, and who beat their wives, jostled each other to press closer and closer, as though they, the legitimate ones, would smother by their pressure one who was illegitimate.

The boy who chanced to be next Simon suddenly put his tongue out at him with a mocking air and shouted at him:

"No papa! No papa!"

Simon seized him by the hair with both hands and set to work to disable his legs with kicks, while he

bit his cheek ferociously. A tremendous struggle ensued between the two combatants, and Simon found himself beaten, torn, bruised, rolled on the ground in the midst of the ring of applauding schoolboys. As he arose, mechanically brushing with his hand his little blouse all covered with dust, some one shouted at him:

"Go and tell your papa."

Then he felt a great sinking at his heart. They were stronger than he was, they had beaten him, and he had no answer to give them, for he knew well that it was true that he had no papa. Full of pride, he attempted for some moments to struggle against the tears which were choking him. He had a feeling of suffocation, and then without any sound he commenced to weep, with great shaking sobs. A ferocious joy broke out among his enemies, and, with one accord, just like savages in their fearful festivals, they took each other by the hand and danced round him in a circle, repeating as a refrain:

"No papa! No papa!"

But suddenly Simon ceased sobbing. He became ferocious. There were stones under his feet; he picked them up and with all his strength hurled them at his tormentors. Two or three were struck and rushed off yelling, and so formidable did he appear that the rest became panic-stricken. Cowards, as the mob always is in presence of an exasperated man, they broke up and fled. Left alone, the little fellow without a father set off running toward the fields, for a recollection had been awakened in him which determined his soul to a great resolve. He made up his mind to drown himself in the river.

He remembered, in fact, that eight days before, a poor devil who begged for his livelihood had thrown himself into the water because he had no more money. Simon had been there when they fished him out again; and the wretched man, who usually seemed to him so miserable, and ugly, had then struck him as being so peaceful with his pale cheeks, his long drenched beard, and his open eyes full of calm. The bystanders had said:

"He is dead."

And some one had said:

"He is quite happy now."

And Simon wished to drown himself also, because he had no father, just like the wretched being who had no money.

He reached the water and watched it flowing. Some fish were sporting briskly in the clear stream and occasionally made a little bound and caught the flies flying on the surface. He stopped crying in order to watch them, for their maneuvers interested him greatly. But, at intervals, as in a tempest intervals of calm alternate suddenly with tremendous gusts of wind, which snap off the trees and then lose themselves in the horizon, this thought would return to him with intense pain:

"I am going to drown myself because I have no papa."

It was very warm, fine weather. The pleasant sunshine warmed the grass. The water shone like a mirror. And Simon enjoyed some minutes of happiness, of that languor which follows weeping, and felt inclined to fall asleep there upon the grass in the warm sunshine.

A little green frog leaped from under his feet. He

endeavored to catch it. It escaped him. He followed it and lost it three times in succession. At last he caught it by one of its hind legs and began to laugh as he saw the efforts the creature made to escape. It gathered itself up on its hind legs and then with a violent spring suddenly stretched them out as stiff as two bars; while it beat the air with its front legs as though they were hands, its round eyes staring in their circle of yellow. It reminded him of a toy made of straight slips of wood nailed zigzag one on the other, which by a similar movement regulated the movements of the little soldiers fastened thereon. Then he thought of his home, and then of his mother, and, overcome by sorrow, he again began to weep. A shiver passed over him. He knelt down and said his prayers as before going to bed. But he was unable to finish them, for tumultuous, violent sobs shook his whole frame. He no longer thought, he no longer saw anything around him, and was wholly absorbed in crying.

Suddenly a heavy hand was placed upon his shoulder, and a rough voice asked him:

"What is it that causes you so much grief, my little man?"

Simon turned round. A tall workman with a beard and black curly hair was staring at him good-naturedly. He answered with his eyes and throat full of tears:

"They beat me—because—I—I have no—papa—no papa."

"What!" said the man, smiling; "why, everybody has one."

The child answered painfully amid his spasms of grief:

"But I—I—I have none."

Then the workman became serious. He had recognized La Blanchotte's son, and, although himself a new arrival in the neighborhood, he had a vague idea of her history.

"Well," said he, "console yourself, my boy, and come with me home to your mother. They will give you—a papa."

And so they started on the way, the big fellow holding the little fellow by the hand, and the man smiled, for he was not sorry to see this Blanchotte, who was, it was said, one of the prettiest girls of the countryside, and, perhaps, he was saying to himself, at the bottom of his heart, that a lass who had erred might very well err again.

They arrived in front of a very neat little white house.

"There it is," exclaimed the child, and he cried, "Mamma!"

A woman appeared, and the workman instantly left off smiling, for he saw at once that there was no fooling to be done with the tall pale girl who stood austerely at her door as though to defend from one man the threshold of that house where she had already been betrayed by another. Intimidated, his cap in his hand, he stammered out:

"See, madame, I have brought you back your little boy who had lost himself near the river."

But Simon flung his arms about his mother's neck and told her, as he again began to cry:

"No, mamma, I wished to drown myself, because the others had beaten me—had beaten me—because I have no papa."

A burning redness covered the young woman's

cheeks; and, hurt to the quick, she embraced her child passionately, while the tears coursed down her face. The man, much moved, stood there, not knowing how to get away. But Simon suddenly ran to him and said:

"Will you be my papa?"

A deep silence ensued. La Blanchotte, dumb and tortured with shame, leaned herself against the wall, both her hands upon her heart. The child, seeing that no answer was made him, replied:

"If you will not, I shall go back and drown myself."

The workman took the matter as a jest and answered, laughing:

"Why, yes, certainly I will."

"What is your name," went on the child, "so that I may tell the others when they wish to know your name?"

"Philip," answered the man.

Simon was silent a moment so that he might get the name well into his head; then he stretched out his arms, quite consoled, as he said:

"Well, then, Philip, you are my papa."

The workman, lifting him from the ground, kissed him hastily on both cheeks, and then walked away very quickly with great strides

When the child returned to school next day he was received with a spiteful laugh, and at the end of school, when the lads were on the point of recommencing, Simon threw these words at their heads as he would have done a stone: "He is named Philip, my papa."

Yells of delight burst out from all sides.

"Philip who? Philip what? What on earth is Philip? Where did you pick up your Philip?"

Simon answered nothing; and, immovable in his faith, he defied them with his eye, ready to be martyred rather than fly before them. The school master came to his rescue and he returned home to his mother.

During three months, the tall workman, Philip, frequently passed by La Blanchotte's house, and sometimes he made bold to speak to her when he saw her sewing near the window. She answered him civilly, always sedately, never joking with him, nor permitting him to enter her house. Notwithstanding, being, like all men, a bit of a coxcomb, he imagined that she was often rosier than usual when she chatted with him.

But a lost reputation is so difficult to regain and always remains so fragile that, in spite of the shy reserve of La Blanchotte, they already gossiped in the neighborhood.

As for Simon, he loved his new papa very much, and walked with him nearly every evening when the day's work was done. He went regularly to school, and mixed with great dignity with his schoolfellows without ever answering them back.

One day, however, the lad who had first attacked him said to him:

"You have lied. You have not a papa named Philip."

"Why do you say that?" demanded Simon, much disturbed.

The youth rubbed his hands. He replied:

"Because if you had one he would be your mamma's husband."

Simon was confused by the truth of this reasoning; nevertheless, he retorted:

"He is my papa, all the same."

"That can very well be," exclaimed the urchin with a sneer, "but that is not being your papa altogether."

La Blanchotte's little one bowed his head and went off dreaming in the direction of the forge belonging to old Loizon, where Philip worked.

This forge was as though buried beneath trees. It was very dark there; the red glare of a formidable furnace alone lit up with great flashes five blacksmiths, who hammered upon their anvils with a terrible din. They were standing enveloped in flame, like demons, their eyes fixed on the red-hot iron they were pounding; and their dull ideas rose and fell with their hammers.

Simon entered without being noticed, and went quietly to pluck his friend by the sleeve. The latter turned round. All at once the work came to a standstill, and all the men looked on, very attentive. Then, in the midst of this unaccustomed silence, rose the slender pipe of Simon:

"Say, Philip, the Michaude boy told me just now that you were not altogether my papa."

"Why not?" asked the blacksmith.

The child replied with all innocence:

"Because you are not my mamma's husband."

No one laughed. Philip remained standing, leaning his forehead upon the back of his great hands, which supported the handle of his hammer standing upright upon the anvil. He mused. His four companions watched him, and Simon, a tiny mite among these giants, anxiously waited. Suddenly, one of

the smiths, answering to the sentiment of all, said to Philip:

"La Blanchotte is a good, honest girl, and upright and steady in spite of her misfortune, and would make a worthy wife for an honest man."

"That is true," remarked the three others.

The smith continued:

"Is it the girl's fault if she went wrong? She had been promised marriage; and I know more than one who is much respected to-day, and who sinned every bit as much."

"That is true," responded the three men in chorus.

He resumed:

"How hard she has toiled, poor thing, to bring up her child all alone, and how she has wept all these years she has never gone out except to church, God only knows."

"This is also true," said the others.

Then nothing was heard but the bellows which fanned the fire of the furnace. Philip hastily bent himself down to Simon:

"Go and tell your mother that I am coming to speak to her this evening."

Then he pushed the child out by the shoulders. He returned to his work, and with a single blow the five hammers again fell upon their anvils. Thus they wrought the iron until nightfall, strong, powerful, happy, like contented hammers. But just as the great bell of a cathedral resounds upon feast days above the jingling of the other bells, so Philip's hammer, sounding above the rest, clanged second after second with a deafening uproar. And he stood amid the flying sparks plying his trade vigorously.

The sky was full of stars as he knocked at La

Blanchotte's door. He had on his Sunday blouse, a clean shirt, and his beard was trimmed. The young woman showed herself upon the threshold, and said in a grieved tone:

"It is ill to come thus when night has fallen, Mr. Philip."

He wished to answer, but stammered and stood confused before her.

She resumed:

"You understand, do you not, that it will not do for me to be talked about again."

"What does that matter to me, if you will be my wife!"

No voice replied to him, but he believed that he heard in the shadow of the room the sound of a falling body. He entered quickly; and Simon, who had gone to bed, distinguished the sound of a kiss and some words that his mother murmured softly. Then, all at once, he found himself lifted up by the hands of his friend, who, holding him at the length of his herculean arms, exclaimed:

"You will tell them, your schoolmates, that your papa is Philip Remy, the blacksmith, and that he will pull the ears of all who do you any harm."

On the morrow, when the school was full and lessons were about to begin, little Simon stood up, quite pale with trembling lips:

"My papa," said he in a clear voice, "is Philip Remy, the blacksmith, and he has promised to pull the ears of all who does me any harm."

This time no one laughed, for he was very well known, was Philip Remy, the blacksmith, and was a papa of whom any one in the world would have been proud.

THE CHILD

LEMONNIER had remained a widower with one child. He had loved his wife devotedly, with a tender and exalted love, without a slip, during their entire married life. He was a good, honest man, perfectly simple, sincere, without suspicion or malice.

He fell in love with a poor neighbor, proposed and was accepted. He was making a very comfortable living out of the wholesale cloth business, and he did not for a minute suspect that the young girl might have accepted him for anything else but himself.

She made him happy. She was everything to him; he only thought of her, looked at her continually, with worshiping eyes. During meals he would make any number of blunders, in order not to have to take his eyes from the beloved face; he would pour the wine in his plate and the water in the salt-cellar, then he would laugh like a child, repeating:

"You see, I love you too much; that makes me crazy."

She would smile with a calm and resigned look; then she would look away, as though embarrassed by the adoration of her husband, and try to make him talk about something else; but he would take

her hand under the table and he would hold it in his, whispering:

"My little Jeanne, my darling little Jeanne!"

She sometimes lost patience and said:

"Come, come, be reasonable; eat and let me eat."

He would sigh and break off a mouthful of bread, which he would then chew slowly.

For five years they had no children. Then suddenly she announced to him that this state of affairs would soon cease. He was wild with joy. He no longer left her for a minute, until his old nurse, who had brought him up and who often ruled the house, would push him out and close the door behind him, in order to compel him to go out in the fresh air.

He had grown very intimate with a young man who had known his wife since childhood, and who was one of the prefect's secretaries. M. Duretour would dine three times a week with the Lemonniers, bringing flowers to madame, and sometimes a box at the theater; and often, at the end of the dinner, Lemonnier, growing tender, turning towards his wife, would explain: "With a companion like you and a friend like him, a man is completely happy on earth."

She died in childbirth. The shock almost killed him. But the sight of the child, a poor, moaning little creature, gave him courage.

He loved it with a passionate and sorrowful love, with a morbid love in which stuck the memory of death, but in which lived something of his worship for the dead mother. It was the flesh of his wife, her being continued, a sort of quintessence of herself. This child was her very life transferred to another body; she had disappeared that it might

exist, and the father would smother it in with kisses. But also, this child had killed her; he had stolen this beloved creature, his life was at the cost of hers. And M. Lemonnier would place his son in the cradle and would sit down and watch him. He would sit this way by the hour, looking at him, dreaming of thousands of things, sweet or sad. Then, when the little one was asleep, he would bend over him and sob.

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The child grew. The father could no longer spend an hour away from him; he would stay near him, take him out for walks, and himself dress him, wash him, make him eat. His friend, M. Duretour, also seemed to love the boy; he would kiss him wildly, in those frenzies of tenderness which are characteristic of parents. He would toss him in his arms, he would trot him on his knees, by the hour, and M. Lemonnier, delighted, would mutter:

"Isn't he a darling? Isn't he a darling?"

And M. Duretour would hug the child in his arms and tickle his neck with his mustache.

Céleste, the old nurse, alone, seemed to have no tenderness for the little one. She would grow angry at his pranks, and seemed impatient at the caresses of the two men. She would exclaim:

"How can you expect to bring a child up like that? You'll make a perfect monkey out of him."

Years went by, and Jean was nine years old. He hardly knew how to read; he had been so spoiled, and only did as he saw fit. He was willful, stubborn and quick-tempered. The father always gave in to him and let him have his own way. M. Duretour would always buy him all the toys he wished,

and he fed him on cake and candies. Then Céleste would grow angry and exclaim:

"It's a shame, monsieur, a shame. You are spoiling this child. But it will have to stop; yes, sir, I tell you it will have to stop, and before long, too."

M. Lemonnier would answer, smiling:

"What can you expect? I love him too much, I can't resist him; you must get used to it."

* * * * * * *

Jean was delicate, rather. The doctor said that he was anæmic, prescribed iron, rare meat and broth.

But the little fellow loved only cake and refused all other nourishment; and the father, in despair, stuffed him with cream-puffs and chocolate éclairs.

One evening, as they were sitting down to supper, Céleste brought on the soup with an air of authority and an assurance which she did not usually have. She took off the cover and, dipping the ladle into the dish, she declared:

"Here is some broth such as I have never made; the young one will have to take some this time."

M. Lemonnier, frightened, bent his head. He saw a storm brewing.

Céleste took his plate, filled it herself and placed it in front of him.

He tasted the soup and said:

"It is, indeed, excellent."

The servant took the boy's plate and poured a spoonful of soup in it. Then she retreated a few steps and waited.

Jean smelled the food and pushed his plate away with an expression of disgust. Céleste, suddenly

pale, quickly stepped forward and forcibly poured a spoonful down the child's open mouth.

He choked, coughed, sneezed, spat; howling, he seized his glass and threw it at his nurse. She received it full in the stomach. Then, exasperated, she took the young shaver's head under her arm and began pouring spoonful after spoonful of soup down his throat. He grew as red as a beet, and he would cough it up, stamping, twisting, choking, beating the air with his hands.

At first the father was so surprised that he could not move. Then, suddenly, he rushed forward, wild with rage, seized the servant by the throat and threw her up against the wall stammering:

"Out! Out! Out! you brute!"

But she shook him off, and, her hair streaming down her back, her eyes snapping, she cried out:

"What's gettin' hold of you? You're trying to thrash me because I am making this child eat soup when you are filling him with sweet stuff!"

He kept repeating, trembling from head to foot:

"Out! Get out—get out, you brute!"

Then, wild, she turned to him and, pushing her face up against his, her voice trembling:

"Ah!—you think—you think that you can treat me like that? Oh! no. And for whom?—for that brat who is not even yours. No, not yours! No, not yours—not yours! Everybody knows it, except yourself! Ask the grocer, the butcher, the baker, all of them, any one of them!"

She was growling and mumbling, choked with passion; then she stopped and looked at him.

He was motionless livid, his arms hanging by his

sides. After a short pause, he murmured in a faint, shaky voice, instinct with deep feeling:

"You say? you say? What do you say?"

She remained silent, frightened by his appearance. Once more he stepped forward, repeating:

"You say—what do you say?"

Then in a calm voice, she answered:

"I say what I know, what everybody knows."

He seized her and, with the fury of a beast, he tried to throw her down. But, although old, she was strong and nimble. She slipped under his arm, and running around the table once more furious, she screamed:

"Look at him, just look at him, fool that you are! Isn't he the living image of M. Durefour? Just look at his nose and his eyes! Are yours like that? And his hair! Is it like his mother's? I tell you that everyone knows it, everyone except yourself! It's the joke of the town! Look at him——!"

She went to the door, opened it, and disappeared.

Jean, frightened, sat motionless before his plate of soup.

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At the end of an hour, she returned gently, to see how matters stood. The child, after doing away with all the cakes and a pitcher full of cream and one of syrup, was now emptying the jam-pot with his soup-spoon.

The father had gone out.

Céleste took the child, kissed him, and gently carried him to his room and put him to bed. She came back to the dining-room, cleared the table, put everything in place, feeling very uneasy all the time.

Not a single sound could be heard throughout the

house. She put her ear against's her master's door. He seemed to be perfectly still. She put her eye to the keyhole. He was writing, and seemed very calm.

Then she returned to the kitchen and sat down, ready for any emergency. She slept on a chair and awoke at daylight.

She did the rooms as she had been accustomed to every morning; she swept and dusted, and, towards eight o'clock, prepared M. Lemonnier's breakfast.

But she did not dare bring it to her master, knowing too well how she would be received; she waited for him to ring. But he did not ring. Nine o'clock, then ten o'clock went by.

Céleste, not knowing what to think, prepared her tray and started up with it, her heart beating fast.

She stopped before the door and listened. Everything was still. She knocked; no answer. Then, gathering up all her courage, she opened the door and entered. With a wild shriek, she dropped the breakfast tray which she had been holding in her hand.

In the middle of the room, M. Lemonnier was hanging by a rope from a ring in the ceiling. His tongue was sticking out horribly. His right slipper was lying on the ground, his left one still on his foot. An upturned chair had rolled over to the bed.

Céleste, dazed, ran away shrieking. All the neighbors crowded together. The physician declared that he had died at about midnight.

A letter addressed to M. Duretour was found on the table of the suicide. It contained these words:

"I leave and entrust the child to you!"

A COUNTRY EXCURSION

FOR five months they had been talking of going to take luncheon in one of the country suburbs of Paris on Madame Dufour's birthday, and as they were looking forward very impatiently to the outing, they rose very early that morning. Monsieur Dufour had borrowed the milkman's wagon and drove himself. It was a very tidy, two-wheeled conveyance, with a cover supported by four iron rods, with curtains that had been drawn up, except the one at the back, which floated out like a sail. Madame Dufour, resplendent in a wonderful, cherry-colored silk dress, sat by the side of her husband.

The old grandmother and a girl sat behind them on two chairs, and a boy with yellow hair was lying at the bottom of the wagon, with nothing to be seen of him except his head.

When they reached the bridge of Neuilly, Monsieur Dufour said: "Here we are in the country at last!" and at that signal his wife grew sentimental about the beauties of nature. When they got to the crossroads at Courbevoie they were seized with admiration for the distant landscape. On the right was Argenteuil with its bell tower, and above it rose the hills of Sannois and the mill of Orgemont, while on the left the aqueduct of Marly stood out against the clear morning sky, and in the distance they could see the terrace of Saint-Germain;

and opposite them, at the end of a low chain of hills, the new fort of Cormeilles. Quite in the distance, a very long way off, beyond the plains and village, one could see the sombre green of the forests.

The sun was beginning to burn their faces, the dust got into their eyes, and on either side of the road there stretched an interminable tract of bare, ugly country with an unpleasant odor. One might have thought that it had been ravaged by a pestilence, which had even attacked the buildings, for skeletons of dilapidated and deserted houses, or small cottages, which were left in an unfinished state, because the contractors had not been paid, reared their four roofless walls on each side.

Here and there tall factory chimneys rose up from the barren soil. The only vegetation on that putrid land, where the spring breezes wafted an odor of petroleum and slate, blended with another odor that was even less agreeable. At last, however, they crossed the Seine a second time, and the bridge was a delight. The river sparkled in the sun, and they had a feeling of quiet enjoyment, felt refreshed as they drank in the purer air that was not impregnated by the black smoke of factories nor by the miasma from the deposits of night soil. A man whom they met told them that the name of the place was Bézons. Monsieur Dufour pulled up and read the attractive announcement outside an eating house: *Restaurant Poulin, matelottes and fried fish, private rooms, arbors, and swings.*

"Well, Madame Dufour, will this suit you? Will you make up your mind at last?"

She read the announcement in her turn and then looked at the house for some time.

It was a white country inn, built by the roadside, and through the open door she could see the bright zinc of the counter, at which sat two workmen in their Sunday clothes. At last she made up her mind and said:

"Yes, this will do; and, besides, there is a view."

They drove into a large field behind the inn, separated from the river by the towing path, and dismounted. The husband sprang out first and then held out his arms for his wife, and as the step was very high, Madame Dufour, in order to reach him, had to show the lower part of her limbs, whose former slenderness had disappeared in fat, and Monsieur Dufour, who was already getting excited by the country air, pinched her calf, and then, taking her in his arms, he set her on the ground, as if she had been some enormous bundle. She shook the dust out of the silk dress and then looked round to see in what sort of a place she was.

She was a stout woman, of about thirty-six, full-blown, and delightful to look at. She could hardly breathe, as her corsets were laced too tightly, and their pressure forced her superabundant bosom up to her double chin. Next the girl placed her hand on her father's shoulder and jumped down lightly. The boy with the yellow hair had got down by stepping on the wheel, and he helped Monsieur Dufour to lift his grandmother out. Then they unharnessed the horse, which they had tied to a tree, and the carriage fell back, with both shafts in the air. The men took off their coats and washed their hands in a pail of water and then went and joined the ladies, who had already taken possession of the swings.

A COUNTRY EXCURSION

Mademoiselle Dufour was trying to swing herself standing up, but she could not succeed in getting a start. She was a pretty girl of about eighteen, one of those women who suddenly excite your desire when you meet them in the street and who leave you with a vague feeling of uneasiness and of excited senses. She was tall, had a small waist and large hips, with a dark skin, very large eyes and very black hair. Her dress clearly marked the outlines of her firm, full figure, which was accentuated by the motion of her hips as she tried to swing herself higher. Her arms were stretched upward to hold the rope, so that her bosom rose at every movement she made. Her hat, which a gust of wind had blown off, was hanging behind her, and as the swing gradually rose higher and higher, she showed her delicate limbs up to the knees each time, and the breeze from her flying skirts, which was more heady than the fumes of wine, blew into the faces of the two men, who were looking at her and smiling.

Sitting in the other swing, Madame Dufour kept saying in a monotonous voice:

"Cyprian, come and swing me; do come and swing me, Cyprian!"

At last he went, and turning up his shirt sleeves, as if undertaking a hard piece of work, with much difficulty he set his wife in motion. She clutched the two ropes and held her legs out straight, so as not to touch the ground. She enjoyed feeling dizzy at the motion of the swing, and her whole figure shook like a jelly on a dish, but as she went higher and higher, she became too giddy and was frightened. Each time the swing came down she uttered a piercing scream, which made all the little urchins

in the neighborhood come round, and down below, beneath the garden hedge, she vaguely saw a row of mischievous heads making various grimaces as they laughed.

When a servant girl came out they ordered luncheon.

"Some fried fish, a rabbit sauté, salad and dessert," Madame Dufour said, with an important air.

"Bring two quarts of beer and a bottle of claret," her husband said.

"We will have lunch on the grass," the girl added.

The grandmother, who had an affection for cats, had been running after one that belonged to the house, trying to coax it to come to her for the last ten minutes. The animal, who was no doubt secretly flattered by her attentions, kept close to the good woman, but just out of reach of her hand, and quietly walked round the trees, against which she rubbed herself, with her tail up, purring with pleasure.

"Hello!" suddenly exclaimed the young man with the yellow hair, who was wandering about. "Here are two swell boats!" They all went to look at them and saw two beautiful canoes in a wooden shed; they were as beautifully finished as if they had been ornamental furniture. They hung side by side, like two tall, slender girls, in their narrow shining length, and made one wish to float in them on warm summer mornings and evenings along the flower-covered banks of the river, where the trees dip their branches into the water, where the rushes are continually rustling in the breeze and where the swift kingfishers dart about like flashes of blue lightning.

The whole family looked at them with great respect.

"Oh, they are indeed swell boats!" Monsieur Dufour repeated gravely, as he examined them like a connoiseur. He had been in the habit of rowing in his younger days, he said, and when he had that in his hands—and he went through the action of pulling the oars—he did not care a fig for anybody. He had beaten more than one Englishman formerly at the Joinville regattas. He grew quite excited at last and offered to make a bet that in a boat like that he could row six leagues an hour without exerting himself.

"Luncheon is ready," the waitress said, appearing at the entrance to the boathouse, and they all hurried off. But two young men had taken the very seats that Madame Dufour had selected and were eating their luncheon. No doubt they were the owners of the sculls, for they were in boating costume. They were stretched out, almost lying on the chairs; they were sun-browned and their thin cotton jerseys, with short sleeves, showed their bare arms, which were as strong as a blacksmith's. They were two strong, athletic fellows, who showed in all their movements that elasticity and grace of limb which can only be acquired by exercise and which is so different to the deformity with which monotonous heavy work stamps the mechanic.

They exchanged a rapid smile when they saw the mother and then a glance on seeing the daughter.

"Let us give up our place," one of them said; "it will make us acquainted with them."

The other got up immediately, and holding his black and red boating cap in his hand, he politely

offered the ladies the only shady place in the garden. With many excuses they accepted, and that it might be more rural, they sat on the grass, without either tables or chairs.

The two young men took their plates, knives, forks, etc., to a table a little way off and began to eat again, and their bare arms, which they showed continually, rather embarrassed the girl. She even pretended to turn her head aside and not to see them, while Madame Dufour, who was rather bolder, tempted by feminine curiosity, looked at them every moment, and, no doubt, compared them with the secret unsightliness of her husband. She had squatted herself on ground, with her legs tucked under her, after the manner of tailors, and she kept moving about restlessly, saying that ants were crawling about her somewhere. Monsieur Dufour, annoyed at the presence of the polite strangers, was trying to find a comfortable position, which he did not, however, succeed in doing, and the young man with the yellow hair was eating as silently as an ogre.

"It is lovely weather, monsieur," the stout lady said to one of the boating men. She wished to be friendly because they had given up their place.

"It is, indeed, madame," he replied. "Do you often go into the country?"

"Oh, only once or twice a year to get a little fresh air. And you, monsieur?"

"I come and sleep here every night."

"Oh, that must be very nice!"

"Certainly it is, madame." And he gave them such a practical account of his daily life that it awakened afresh in the hearts of these shopkeepers, who were deprived of the meadows and who longed

for country walks, to that foolish love of nature which they all feel so strongly the whole year round behind the counter in their shop.

The girl raised her eyes and looked at the oarsman with emotion and Monsieur Dufour spoke for the first time.

"It is indeed a happy life," he said. And then he added: "A little more rabbit, my dear?"

"No, thank you," she replied, and turning to the young men again, and pointing to their arms, asked: "Do you never feel cold like that?"

They both began to laugh, and they astonished the family with an account of the enormous fatigue they could endure, of their bathing while in a state of tremendous perspiration, of their rowing in the fog at night; and they struck their chests violently to show how hollow they sounded.

"Ah! You look very strong," said the husband, who did not talk any more of the time when he used to beat the English. The girl was looking at them sideways now, and the young fellow with the yellow hair, who had swallowed some wine the wrong way, was coughing violently and bespattering Madame Dufour's cherry-colored silk dress. She got angry and sent for some water to wash the spots.

Meanwhile it had grown unbearably hot, the sparkling river looked like a blaze of fire and the fumes of the wine were getting into their heads. Monsieur Dufour, who had a violent hiccough, had unbuttoned his waistcoat and the top button of his trousers, while his wife, who felt choking, was gradually unfastening her dress. The apprentice was shaking his yellow wig in a happy frame of mind, and kept helping himself to wine, and the old grand-

mother, feeling the effects of the wine, was very stiff and dignified. As for the girl, one noticed only a peculiar brightness in her eyes, while the brown cheeks became more rosy.

The coffee finished, they suggested singing, and each of them sang or repeated a couplet, which the others applauded frantically. Then they got up with some difficulty, and while the two women, who were rather dizzy, were trying to get a breath of air, the two men, who were altogether drunk, were attempting gymnastics. Heavy, limp and with scarlet faces they hung on awkwardly to the iron rings, without being able to raise themselves.

Meanwhile the two boating men had got their boats into the water, and they came back and politely asked the ladies whether they would like a row.

"Would you like one, Monsieur Dufour?" his wife exclaimed. "Please come!"

He merely gave her a drunken nod, without understanding what she said. Then one of the rowers came up with two fishing rods in his hands, and the hope of catching a gudgeon, that great vision of the Parisian shopkeeper, made Dufour's dull eyes gleam, and he politely allowed them to do whatever they liked, while he sat in the shade under the bridge, with his feet dangling over the river, by the side of the young man with the yellow hair, who was sleeping soundly.

One of the boating men made a martyr of himself and took the mother.

"Let us go to the little wood on the Ile aux Anglais!" he called out as he rowed off. The other boat went more slowly, for the rower was looking

at his companion so intently that he thought of nothing else, and his emotion seemed to paralyze his strength, while the girl, who was sitting in the bow, gave herself up to the enjoyment of being on the water. She felt a disinclination to think, a lassitude in her limbs and a total enervation, as if she were intoxicated, and her face was flushed and her breathing quickened. The effects of the wine, which were increased by the extreme heat, made all the trees on the bank seem to bow as she passed. A vague wish for enjoyment and a fermentation of her blood seemed to pervade her whole body, which was excited by the heat of the day, and she was also disturbed at this tête-à-tête on the water, in a place which seemed depopulated by the heat, with this young man who thought her pretty, whose ardent looks seemed to caress her skin and were as penetrating and pervading as the sun's rays.

Their inability to speak increased their emotion, and they looked about them. At last, however, he made an effort and asked her name.

"Henriette," she said.

"Why, my name is Henri," he replied. The sound of their voices had calmed them, and they looked at the banks. The other boat had passed them and seemed to be waiting for them, and the rower called out:

"We will meet you in the wood; we are going as far as Robinson's, because Madame Dufour is thirsty." Then he bent over his oars again and rowed off so quickly that he was soon out of sight.

Meanwhile a continual roar, which they had heard for some time, came nearer, and the river itself

seemed to shiver, as if the dull noise were rising from its depths.

"What is that noise?" she asked. It was the noise of the weir which cut the river in two at the island, and he was explaining it to her, when, above the noise of the waterfall, they heard the song of a bird, which seemed a long way off.

"Listen!" he said; "the nightingales are singing during the day, so the female birds must be sitting."

A nightingale! She had never heard one before, and the idea of listening to one roused visions of poetic tenderness in her heart. A nightingale! That is to say, the invisible witness of her love trysts which Juliet invoked on her balcony: that celestial music which it attuned to human kisses, that eternal inspirer of all those languorous romances which open an ideal sky to all the poor little tender hearts of sensitive girls!

She was going to hear a nightingale.

"We must not make a noise," her companion said, "and then we can go into the wood, and sit down close beside it."

The boat seemed to glide. They saw the trees on the island, the banks of which were so low that they could look into the depths of the thickets. They stopped, he made the boat fast, Henriette took hold of Henri's arm, and they went beneath the trees.

"Stoop," he said, so she stooped down, and they went into an inextricable thicket of creepers, leaves and reed grass, which formed an undiscoverable retreat, and which the young man laughingly called "his private room."

Just above their heads, perched in one of the

trees which hid them, the bird was still singing. He uttered trills and roulades, and then loud, vibrating notes that filled the air and seemed to lose themselves on the horizon, across the level country, through that burning silence which weighed upon the whole landscape. They did not speak for fear of frightening it away. They were sitting close together, and, slowly, Henri's arm stole round the girl's waist and squeezed it gently. She took that daring hand without any anger, and kept removing it whenever he put it round her; without, however, feeling at all embarrassed by this caress, just as if it had been something quite natural, which she was resisting just as naturally.

She was listening to the bird in ecstasy. She felt an infinite longing for happiness, for some sudden demonstration of tenderness, for the revelation of superhuman poetry, and she felt such a softening at her heart, and relaxation of her nerves, that she began to cry, without knowing why. The young man was now straining her close to him, but she did not remove his arm; she did not think of it. Suddenly the nightingale stopped, and a voice called out in the distance:

"Henriette!"

"Do not reply," he said in a low voice; "you will drive the bird away."

But she had no idea of doing so, and they remained in the same position for some time. Madame Dufour had sat down somewhere or other, for from time to time they heard the stout lady break out into little bursts of laughter.

The girl was still crying; she was filled with strange sensations. Henri's head was on her shoul-

der, and suddenly he kissed her on the lips. She was surprised and angry, and, to avoid him, she stood up.

They were both very pale when they left their grassy retreat. The blue sky appeared to them clouded and the ardent sun darkened; and they felt the solitude and the silence. They walked rapidly, side by side, without speaking or touching each other, for they seemed to have become irreconcilable enemies, as if disgust and hatred had arisen between them, and from time to time Henriette called out: "Mamma!"

By and by they heard a noise behind a bush, and the stout lady appeared, looking rather confused, and her companion's face was wrinkled with smiles which he could not check.

Madame Dufour took his arm, and they returned to the boats, and Henri, who was ahead, walked in silence beside the young girl. At last they got back to Bézons. Monsieur Dufour, who was now sober, was waiting for them very impatiently, while the young man with the yellow hair was having a mouthful of something to eat before leaving the inn. The carriage was waiting in the yard, and the grandmother, who had already got in, was very frightened at the thought of being overtaken by night before they reached Paris, as the outskirts were not safe.

They all shook hands, and the Dufour family drove off.

"Good-by, until we meet again!" the oarsmen cried, and the answer they got was a sigh and a tear.

* * * * * * *

Two months later, as Henri was going along the Rue des Martyrs, he saw *Dufour, Ironmonger,* over a door, and so he went in, and saw the stout lady sitting at the counter. They recognized each other immediately, and after an interchange of polite greetings, he asked after them all.

"And how is Mademoiselle Henriette?" he inquired specially.

"Very well, thank you; she is married."

"Ah!" He felt a certain emotion, but said: "Whom did she marry?"

"That young man who accompanied us, you know; he has joined us in business."

"I remember him perfectly."

He was going out, feeling very unhappy, though scarcely knowing why, when madame called him back.

"And how is your friend?" she asked rather shyly.

"He is very well, thank you."

"Please give him our compliments, and beg him to come and call, when he is in the neighborhood."

She then added: "Tell him it will give me great pleasure."

"I will be sure to do so. Adieu!"

"Do not say that; come again very soon."

* * * * * * *

The next year, one very hot Sunday, all the details of that adventure, which Henri had never forgotten, suddenly came back to him so clearly that he returned alone to their room in the wood, and was overwhelmed with astonishment when he went in. She was sitting on the grass, looking very sad, while by her side, still in his shirt sleeves, the

young man with the yellow hair was sleeping soundly, like some animal.

She grew so pale when she saw Henri that at first he thought she was going to faint; then, however, they began to talk quite naturally. But when he told her that he was very fond of that spot, and went there frequently on Sundays to indulge in memories, she looked into his eyes for a long time.

"I, too, think of it," she replied.

"Come, my dear," her husband said, with a yawn. "I think it is time for us to be going."

ROSE

THE two young women appear to be buried under a blanket of flowers. They are alone in the immense landau, which is filled with flowers like a giant basket. On the front seat are two small hampers of white satin filled with violets, and on the bearskin by which their knees are covered there is a mass of roses, mimosas, pinks, daisies, tuberoses and orange blossoms, interwoven with silk ribbons; the two frail bodies seem buried under this beautiful perfumed bed, which hides everything but the shoulders and arms and a little of the dainty waists.

The coachman's whip is wound with a garland of anemones, the horses' traces are dotted with carnations, the spokes of the wheels are clothed in mignonette, and where the lanterns ought to be are two enormous round bouquets which look as though they were the eyes of this strange, rolling, flower-bedecked creature.

The landau drives rapidly along the road, through the Rue d'Antibes, preceded, followed, accompanied, by a crowd of other carriages covered with flowers, full of women almost hidden by a sea of violets. It is the flower carnival at Cannes.

The carriage reaches the Boulevard de la Foncière, where the battle is waged. All along the immense avenue a double row of flower-bedecked ve-

hicles are going and coming like an endless ribbon. Flowers are thrown from one to the other. They pass through the air like balls, striking fresh faces, bouncing and falling into the dust, where an army of youngsters pick them up.

A thick crowd is standing on the sidewalks looking on and held in check by the mounted police, who pass brutally along pushing back the curious pedestrians as though to prevent the common people from mingling with the rich.

In the carriages, people call to each other, recognize each other and bombard each other with roses. A chariot full of pretty women, dressed in red, like devils, attracts the eyes of all. A gentleman, who looks like the portraits of Henry IV., is throwing an immense bouquet which is held back by an elastic. Fearing the shock, the women hide their eyes and the men lower their heads, but the graceful, rapid and obedient missile describes a curve and returns to its master, who immediately throws it at some new face.

The two young women begin to throw their stock of flowers by handfuls, and receive a perfect hail of bouquets; then, after an hour of warfare, a little tired, they tell the coachman to drive along the road which follows the seashore.

The sun disappears behind Esterel, outlining the dark, rugged mountain against the sunset sky. The clear blue sea, as calm as a mill-pond, stretches out as far as the horizon, where it blends with the sky; and the fleet, anchored in the middle of the bay, looks like a herd of enormous beasts, motionless on the water, apocalyptic animals, armored and hump-

backed, their frail masts looking like feathers, and with eyes which light up when evening approaches.

The two young women, leaning back under the heavy robes, look out lazily over the blue expanse of water. At last one of them says:

"How delightful the evenings are! How good everything seems! Don't you think so, Margot?"

"Yes, it is good. But there is always something lacking."

"What is lacking? I feel perfectly happy. I don't need anything else."

"Yes, you do. You are not thinking of it. No matter how contented we may be, physically, we always long for something more—for the heart."

The other asked with a smile:

"A little love?"

"Yes."

They stopped talking, their eyes fastened on the distant horizon, then the one called Marguerite murmured: "Life without that seems to me unbearable. I need to be loved, if only by a dog. But we are all alike, no matter what you may say, Simone."

"Not at all, my dear. I had rather not be loved at all than to be loved by the first comer. Do you think, for instance, that it would be pleasant to be loved by—by——"

She was thinking by whom she might possibly be loved, glancing across the wide landscape. Her eyes, after traveling around the horizon, fell on the two bright buttons which were shining on the back of the coachman's livery, and she continued, laughing: "by my coachman?"

Madame Margot barely smiled, and said in a low tone of voice:

"I assure you that it is very amusing to be loved by a servant. It has happened to me two or three times. They roll their eyes in such a funny manner —it's enough to make you die laughing! Naturally, the more in love they are, the more severe one must be with them, and then, some day, for some reason, you dismiss them, because, if anyone should notice it, you would appear so ridiculous."

Madame Simone was listening, staring straight ahead of her, then she remarked:

"No, I'm afraid that my footman's heart would not satisfy me. Tell me how you noticed that they loved you."

"I noticed it the same way that I do with other men—when they get stupid."

"The others don't seem stupid to me, when they love me."

"They are idiots, my dear, unable to talk, to answer, to understand anything."

"But how did you feel when you were loved by a servant? Were you—moved—flattered?"

"Moved? no, flattered—yes a little. One is always flattered to be loved by a man, no matter who he may be."

"Oh, Margot!"

"Yes, indeed, my dear! For instance, I will tell you of a peculiar incident which happened to me. You will see how curious and complex our emotions are, in such cases.

"About four years ago I happened to be without a maid. I had tried five or six, one right after the other, and I was about ready to give up in despair, when I saw an advertisement in a newspaper of a young girl knowing how to cook, embroider, dress

hair, who was looking for a position and who could furnish the best of references. Besides all these accomplishments, she could speak English.

"I wrote to the given address, and the next day the person in question presented herself. She was tall, slender, pale, shy-looking. She had beautiful black eyes and a charming complexion; she pleased me immediately. I asked for her certificates; she gave me one in English, for she came, as she said, from Lady Rymwell's, where she had been for ten years.

"The certificate showed that the young girl had left of her own free will, in order to return to France, and the only thing which they had had to find fault in her during her long period of service was a little *French coquettishness.*

"This prudish English phrase even made me smile, and I immediately engaged this maid.

"She came to me the same day. Her name was Rose.

"At the end of a month I would have been helpless without her. She was a treasure, a pearl, a phenomenon.

"She could dress my hair with infinite taste; she could trim a hat better than most milliners, and she could even make my dresses.

"I was astonished at her accomplishments. I had never before been waited on in such a manner.

"She dressed me rapidly and with a surprisingly light touch. I never felt her fingers on my skin, and nothing is so disagreeable to me as contact with a servant's hand. I soon became excessively lazy; it was so pleasant to be dressed from head to foot, and from lingerie to gloves, by this tall, timid girl,

always blushing a little, and never saying a word. After my bath she would rub and massage me while I dozed a little on my couch; I almost considered her more of a friend than a servant.

"One morning the janitor asked, mysteriously, to speak to me. I was surprised, and told him to come in. He was a good, faithful man, an old soldier, one of my husband's former orderlies.

"He seemed to be embarrassed by what he had to say to me. At last he managed to mumble:

"'Madame, the superintendent of police is downstairs.'

"I asked quickly:

"'What does he wish?'

"'He wishes to search the house.'

"Of course the police are useful, but I hate them. I do not think that it is a noble profession. I answered, angered and hurt:

"'Why this search? For what reason? He shall not come in.'

"The janitor continued:

"'He says that there is a criminal hidden in the house.'

"This time I was frightened and I told him to bring the inspector to me, so that I might get some explanation. He was a man with good manners and decorated with the Legion of Honor. He begged my pardon for disturbing me, and then informed me that I had, among my domestics, a convict.

"I was shocked; and I answered that I could guarantee every servant in the house, and I began to enumerate them.

"'The janitor, Pierre Courtin, an old soldier.'

"'It's not he.'

"'A stable-boy, son of farmers whom I know, and a groom whom you have just seen.'

"'It's not he.'

"'Then, monsieur, you see that you must be mistaken.'

"'Excuse me, madame, but I am positive that I am not making a mistake. As the conviction of a notable criminal is at stake, would you be so kind as to send for all your servants?"

"At first I refused, but I finally gave in, and sent downstairs for everybody, men and women.

"The inspector glanced at them and then declared:

"'This isn't all.'

"'Excuse me, monsieur, there is no one left but my maid, a young girl whom you could not possibly mistake for a convict.'

"He asked:

"'May I also see her?'

"'Certainly.'

"I rang for Rose, who immediately appeared. She had hardly entered the room, when the inspector made a motion, and two men whom I had not seen, hidden behind the door, sprang forward, seized her and tied her hands behind her back.

"I cried out in anger and tried to rush forward to defend her. The inspector stopped me:

"'This girl, madame, is a man whose name is Jean Nicolas Lecapet, condemned to death in 1879 for assaulting a woman and injuring her so that death resulted. His sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life. He escaped four months ago. We have been looking for him ever since.'

"I was terrified, bewildered. I did not believe him. The commissioner continued, laughing:

"'I can prove it to you. His right arm is tattooed.'

"The sleeve was rolled up. It was true. The inspector added, with bad taste:

"'You can trust us for the other proofs.'

"And they led my maid away!

"Well, would you believe me, the thing that moved me most was not anger at having thus been played upon, deceived and made ridiculous, it was not the shame of having thus been dressed and undressed, handled and touched by this man—but a—deep humiliation—a woman's humiliation. Do you understand?"

"I am afraid I don't."

"Just think—this man had been condemned for —for assaulting a woman. Well! I thought—of the one whom he had assaulted—and—and I felt humiliated—There! Do you understand now?"

Madame Margot did not answer. She was looking straight ahead, her eyes fastened on the two shining buttons of the livery, with that sphinx-like smile which women sometimes have.

ROSALIE PRUDENT

THERE was a real mystery in this affair which neither the jury, nor the president, nor the public prosecutor himself could understand.

The girl Prudent (Rosalie), servant at the Varambots', of Nantes, having become *enceinte* without the knowledge of her masters, had, during the night, killed and buried her child in the garden.

It was the usual story of the infanticides committed by servant girls. But there was one inexplicable circumstance about this one. When the police searched the girl Prudent's room they discovered a complete infant's outfit, made by Rosalie herself, who had spent her nights for the last three months in cutting and sewing it. The grocer from whom she had bought her candles, out of her own wages, for this long piece of work had come to testify. It came out, moreover, that the sage-femme of the district, informed by Rosalie of her condition, had given her all necessary instructions and counsel in case the event should happen at a time when it might not be possible to get help. She had also procured a place at Poissy for the girl Prudent, who foresaw that her present employers would discharge her, for the Varambot couple did not trifle with morality.

There were present at the trial both the man and the woman, a middle-class pair from the provinces,

She began to cry so bitterly that they had to give her time to collect herself.

Then the president resumed with the tone of a priest at the confessional: "Come, now, go on."

She began to talk again: "When I realized my condition I went to see Madame Boudin, who is there to tell you, and I asked her how it would be, in case it should come if she were not there. Then I made the outfit, sewing night after night, every evening until one o'clock in the morning; and then I looked for another place, for I knew very well that I should be sent away, but I wanted to stay in the house until the very last, so as to save my pennies, for I have not got very much and I should need my money for the little one."

"Then you did not intend to kill him?"

"Oh, certainly not, monsieur!"

"Why did you kill him, then?"

"It happened this way. It came sooner than I expected. It came upon me in the kitchen, while I was doing the dishes. Monsieur and Madame Varambot were already asleep, so I went up, not without difficulty, dragging myself up by the banister, and I lay down on the bare floor. It lasted perhaps one hour, or two, or three; I don't know, I had such pain; and then I pushed him out with all my strength. I felt that he came out and I picked him up.

"Ah! but I was glad, I assure you! I did all that Madame Boudin told me to do. And then I laid him on my bed. And then such a pain griped me again that I thought I should die. If you knew what it meant, you there, you would not do so much of this. I fell on my knees, and then toppled over backward on the floor; and it griped me again, perhaps one

hour, perhaps two. I lay there all alone—and then another one comes—another little one—two, yes, two, like this. I took him up as I did the first one, and then I put him on the bed, the two side by side. Is it possible, tell me, two children, and I who get only twenty francs a month? Say, is it possible? One, yes, that can be managed by going without things, but not two. That turned my head. What do I know about it? Had I any choice, tell me?

"What could I do? I felt as if my last hour had come. I put the pillow over them, without knowing why. I could not keep them both; and then I threw myself down, and I lay there, rolling over and over and crying until I saw the daylight come into the window. Both of them were quite dead under the pillow. Then I took them under my arms and went down the stairs out in the vegetable garden. I took the gardener's spade and I buried them under the earth, digging as deep a hole as I could, one here and the other one there, not together, so that they might not talk of their mother if these little dead bodies can talk. What do I know about it?

"And then, back in my bed, I felt so sick that I could not get up. They sent for the doctor and he understood it all. I'm telling you the truth, Your Honor. Do what you like with me; I'm ready."

Half of the jury were blowing their noses violently to keep from crying. The women in the courtroom were sobbing.

The president asked her:

"Where did you bury the other one?"

"The one that you have?" she asked.

"Why, this one—this one was in the artichokes."

"Oh, then the other one is among the strawberries, by the well."

And she began to sob so piteously that no one could hear her unmoved.

The girl Rosalie Prudent was acquitted.

REGRET

MONSIEUR SAVAL, who was called in Mantes "Father Saval," had just risen from bed. He was weeping. It was a dull autumn day; the leaves were falling. They fell slowly in the rain, like a heavier and slower rain. M. Saval was not in good spirits. He walked from the fireplace to the window, and from the window to the fireplace. Life has its sombre days. It would no longer have any but sombre days for him, for he had reached the age of sixty-two. He is alone, an old bachelor, with nobody about him. How sad it is to die alone, all alone, without any one who is devoted to you!

He pondered over his life, so barren, so empty. He recalled former days, the days of his childhood, the home, the house of his parents; his college days, his follies, the time he studied law in Paris, his father's illness, his death. He then returned to live with his mother. They lived together very quietly, and desired nothing more. At last the mother died. How sad life is! He lived alone since then, and now, in his turn, he, too, will soon be dead. He will disappear, and that will be the end. There will be no more of Paul Saval upon the earth. What a frightful thing! Other people will love, will laugh. Yes, people will go on amusing themselves, and he will no longer exist! Is it not strange that people

can laugh, amuse themselves, be joyful under that eternal certainty of death? If this death were only probable, one could then have hope; but no, it is inevitable, as inevitable as that night follows the day.

If, however, his life had been full! If he had done something; if he had had adventures, great pleasures, success, satisfaction of some kind or another. But no, nothing. He had done nothing, nothing but rise from bed, eat, at the same hours, and go to bed again. And he had gone on like that to the age of sixty-two years. He had not even taken unto himself a wife, as other men do. Why? Yes, why was it that he had not married? He might have done so, for he possessed considerable means. Had he lacked an opportunity? Perhaps! But one can create opportunities. He was indifferent; that was all. Indifference had been his greatest drawback, his defect, his vice. How many men wreck their lives through indifference! It is so difficult for some natures to get out of bed, to move about, to take long walks, to speak, to study any question.

He had not even been loved. No woman had reposed on his bosom, in a complete abandon of love. He knew nothing of the delicious anguish of expectation, the divine vibration of a hand in yours, of the ecstasy of triumphant passion.

What superhuman happiness must overflow your heart, when lips encounter lips for the first time, when the grasp of four arms makes one being of you, a being unutterably happy, two beings infatuated with one another.

M. Saval was sitting before the fire, his feet on the fender, in his dressing gown. Assuredly his life

had been spoiled, completely spoiled. He had, however, loved. He had loved secretly, sadly, and indifferently, in a manner characteristic of him in everything. Yes, he had loved his old friend, Madame Sandres, the wife of his old companion, Sandres. Ah! if he had known her as a young girl! But he had met her too late; she was already married. Unquestionably, he would have asked her hand! How he had loved her, nevertheless, without respite, since the first day he set eyes on her!

He recalled his emotion every time he saw her, his grief on leaving her, the many nights that he could not sleep, because he was thinking of her.

On rising in the morning he was somewhat more rational than on the previous evening.

Why?

How pretty she was formerly, so dainty, with fair curly hair, and always laughing. Sandres was not the man she should have chosen. She was now fifty-two years of age. She seemed happy. Ah! if she had only loved him in days gone by; yes, if she had only loved him! And why should she not have loved him, he, Saval, seeing that he loved her so much, yes, she, Madame Sandres!

If only she could have guessed. Had she not guessed anything, seen anything, comprehended anything? What would she have thought? If he had spoken, what would she have answered?

And Saval asked himself a thousand other things. He reviewed his whole life, seeking to recall a multitude of details.

He recalled all the long evenings spent at the house of Sandres, when the latter's wife was young, and so charming.

He recalled many things that she had said to him, the intonations of her voice, the little significant smiles that meant so much.

He recalled their walks, the three of them together, along the banks of the Seine, their luncheon on the grass on Sundays, for Sandres was employed at the sub-prefecture. And all at once the distinct recollection came to him of an afternoon spent with her in a little wood on the banks of the river.

They had set out in the morning, carrying their provisions in baskets. It was a bright spring morning, one of those days which intoxicate one. Everything smells fresh, everything seems happy. The voices of the birds sound more joyous, and they fly more swiftly. They had luncheon on the grass, under the willow trees, quite close to the water, which glittered in the sun's rays. The air was balmy, charged with the odors of fresh vegetation; they drank it in with delight. How pleasant everything was on that day!

After lunch, Sandres went to sleep on the broad of his back. "The best nap he had in his life," said he, when he woke up.

Madame Sandres had taken the arm of Saval, and they started to walk along the river bank.

She leaned tenderly on his arm. She laughed and said to him: "I am intoxicated, my friend, I am quite intoxicated." He looked at her, his heart going pit-a-pat. He felt himself grow pale, fearful that he might have looked too boldly at her, and that the trembling of his hand had revealed his passion.

She had made a wreath of wild flowers and water-

lilies, and she asked him: "Do I look pretty like that?"

As he did not answer—for he could find nothing to say, he would have liked to go down on his knees —she burst out laughing, a sort of annoyed, displeased laugh, as she said: "Great goose, what ails you? You might at least say something."

He felt like crying, but could not even yet find a word to say.

All these things came back to him now, as vividly as on the day when they took place. Why had she said this to him, "Great goose, what ails you? You might at least say something!"

And he recalled how tenderly she had leaned on his arm. And in passing under a shady tree he had felt her ear brushing his cheek, and he had moved his head abruptly, lest she should suppose he was too familiar.

When he had said to her: "Is it not time to return?" she darted a singular look at him. "Certainly," she said, "certainly," regarding him at the same time in a curious manner. He had not thought of it at the time, but now the whole thing appeared to him quite plain.

"Just as you like, my friend. If you are tired let us go back."

And he had answered: "I am not fatigued; but Sandres may be awake now."

And she had said: "If you are afraid of my husband's being awake, that is another thing. Let us return."

On their way back she remained silent, and leaned no longer on his arm. Why?

At that time it had never occurred to him, to

ask himself "why." Now he seemed to apprehend something that he had not then understood.

Could it? . . .

M. Saval felt himself blush, and he got up at a bound, as if he were thirty years younger and had heard Madame Sandres say, "I love you."

Was it possible? That idea which had just entered his mind tortured him. Was it possible that he had not seen, had not guessed?

Oh! if that were true, if he had let this opportunity of happiness pass without taking advantage of it!

He said to himself : "I must know. I cannot remain in this state of doubt. I must know!" He thought: "I am sixty-two years of age, she is fifty-eight; I may ask her that now without giving offense."

He started out.

The Sandres' house was situated on the other side of the street, almost directly opposite his own. He went across and knocked at the door, and a little servant opened it.

"You here at this hour, Saval! Has some accident happened to you?"

"No, my girl," he replied; "but go and tell your mistress that I want to speak to her at once."

"The fact is madame is preserving pears for the winter, and she is in the preserving room. She is not dressed, you understand."

"Yes, but go and tell her that I wish to see her on a very important matter."

The little servant went away, and Saval began to walk, with long, nervous strides, up and down the drawing-room. He did not feel in the least

embarrassed, however. Oh! he was merely going to ask her something, as he would have asked her about some cooking recipe. He was sixty-two years of age!

The door opened and madame appeared. She was now a large woman, fat and round, with full cheeks and a sonorous laugh. She walked with her arms away from her sides and her sleeves tucked up, her bare arms all covered with fruit juice. She asked anxiously:

"What is the matter with you, my friend? You are not ill, are you?"

"No, my dear friend; but I wish to ask you one thing, which to me is of the first importance, something which is torturing my heart, and I want you to promise that you will answer me frankly."

She laughed, "I am always frank. Say on."

"Well, then. I have loved you from the first day I ever saw you. Can you have any doubt of this?"

She responded, laughing, with something of her former tone of voice.

"Great goose! what ails you? I knew it from the very first day!"

Saval began to tremble. He stammered out: "You knew it? Then . . ."

He stopped.

She asked:

"Then? . . . What?"

He answered:

"Then—what did you think? What—what—what would you have answered?"

She broke into a peal of laughter. Some of the juice ran off the tips of her fingers on to the carpet.

"I? Why, you did not ask me anything. It was not for me to declare myself!"

He then advanced a step toward her.

"Tell me—tell me. . . . You remember the day when Sandres went to sleep on the grass after lunch . . . when we had walked together as far as the bend of the river, below . . ."

He waited, expectantly. She had ceased to laugh, and looked at him, straight in the eyes.

"Yes, certainly, I remember it."

He answered, trembling all over:

"Well—that day—if I had been—if I had been—venturesome—what would you have done?"

She began to laugh as only a happy woman can laugh, who has nothing to regret, and responded frankly, in a clear voice tinged with irony:

"I would have yielded, my friend."

She then turned on her heels and went back to her jam-making.

Saval rushed into the street, cast down, as though he had met with some disaster. He walked with giant strides through the rain, straight on, until he reached the river bank, without thinking where he was going. He then turned to the right and followed the river. He walked a long time, as if urged on by some instinct. His clothes were running with water, his hat was out of shape, as soft as a rag, and dripping like a roof. He walked on, straight in front of him. At last, he came to the place where they had lunched on that day so long ago, the recollection of which tortured his heart. He sat down under the leafless trees, and wept.

A SISTER'S CONFESSION

MARGUERITE DE THERELLES was dying. Although she was only fifty-six years old she looked at least seventy-five. She gasped for breath, her face whiter than the sheets, and had spasms of violent shivering, with her face convulsed and her eyes haggard as though she saw a frightful vision.

Her elder sister, Suzanne, six years older than herself, was sobbing on her knees beside the bed. A small table close to the dying woman's couch bore, on a white cloth, two lighted candles, for the priest was expected at any moment to administer extreme unction and the last communion.

The apartment wore that melancholy aspect common to death chambers; a look of despairing farewell. Medicine bottles littered the furniture; linen lay in the corners into which it had been kicked or swept. The very chairs looked, in their disarray, as if they were terrified and had run in all directions. Death—terrible Death—was in the room, hidden, awaiting his prey.

This history of the two sisters was an affecting one. It was spoken of far and wide; it had drawn tears from many eyes.

Suzanne, the elder, had once been passionately loved by a young man, whose affection she returned. They were engaged to be married, and the wedding

day was at hand, when Henry de Sampierre suddenly died.

The young girl's despair was terrible, and she took an oath never to marry. She faithfully kept her vow and adopted widow's weeds for the remainder of her life.

But one morning her sister, her little sister Marguerite, then only twelve years old, threw herself into Suzanne's arms, sobbing: "Sister, I don't want you to be unhappy. I don't want you to mourn all your life. I'll never leave you—never, never, never! I shall never marry, either. I'll stay with you always—always!"

Suzanne kissed her, touched by the child's devotion, though not putting any faith in her promise.

But the little one kept her word, and, despite her parents' remonstrances, despite her elder sister's prayers, never married. She was remarkably pretty and refused many offers. She never left her sister.

They spent their whole life together, without a single day's separation. They went everywhere together and were inseparable. But Marguerite was pensive, melancholy, sadder than her sister, as if her sublime sacrifice had undermined her spirits. She grew older more quickly; her hair was white at thirty; and she was often ill, apparently stricken with some unknown, wasting malady.

And now she would be the first to die.

She had not spoken for twenty-four hours, except to whisper at daybreak:

"Send at once for the priest."

And she had since remained lying on her back, convulsed with agony, her lips moving as if unable to utter the dreadful words that rose in her heart,

her face expressive of a terror distressing to witness.

Suzanne, distracted with grief, her brow pressed against the bed, wept bitterly, repeating over and over again the words:

"Margot, my poor Margot, my little one!"

She had always called her "my little one," while Marguerite's name for the elder was invariably "sister."

A footstep sounded on the stairs. The door opened. An acolyte appeared, followed by the aged priest in his surplice. As soon as she saw him the dying woman sat up suddenly in bed, opened her lips, stammered a few words and began to scratch the bed-clothes, as if she would have made a hole in them.

Father Simon approached, took her hand, kissed her on the forehead and said in a gentle voice:

"May God pardon your sins, my daughter. Be of good courage. Now is the moment to confess them—speak!"

Then Marguerite, shuddering from head to foot, so that the very bed shook with her nervous movements, gasped:

"Sit down, sister, and listen."

The priest stooped toward the prostrate Suzanne, raised her to her feet, placed her in a chair, and, taking a hand of each of the sisters, pronounced:

"Lord God! Send them strength! Shed Thy mercy upon them."

And Marguerite began to speak. The words issued from her lips one by one—hoarse, jerky, tremulous.

"Pardon, pardon, sister! pardon me! Oh, if only

you knew how I have dreaded this moment all my life!"

Suzanne faltered through her tears:

"But what have I to pardon, little one? You have given me everything, sacrificed all to me. You are an angel."

But Marguerite interrupted her:

"Be silent, be silent! Let me speak! Don't stop me! It is terrible. Let me tell all, to the very end, without interruption. Listen. You remember—you remember—Henry——"

Suzanne trembled and looked at her sister. The younger one went on:

"In order to understand you must hear everything. I was twelve years old—only twelve—you remember, don't you? And I was spoilt; I did just as I pleased. You remember how everybody spoilt me? Listen. The first time he came he had on his riding boots; he dismounted, saying that he had a message for father. You remember, don't you? Don't speak. Listen. When I saw him I was struck with admiration. I thought him so handsome, and I stayed in a corner of the drawing-room all the time he was talking. Children are strange—and terrible. Yes, indeed, I dreamt of him.

"He came again—many times. I looked at him with all my eyes, all my heart. I was large for my age and much more precocious than any one suspected. He came often. I thought only of him. I often whispered to myself:

"'Henry—Henry de Sampierre!'

"Then I was told that he was going to marry you. That was a blow! Oh, sister, a terrible blow—terrible! I wept all through three sleepless nights.

He came every afternoon after lunch. You remember, don't you? Don't answer. Listen. You used to make cakes that he was very fond of—with flour, butter and milk. Oh, I know how to make them. I could make them still, if necessary. He would swallow them at one mouthful and wash them down with a glass of wine, saying: 'Delicious!' Do you remember the way he said it?

"I was jealous—jealous! Your wedding day was drawing near. It was only a fortnight distant. I was distracted. I said to myself: 'He shall not marry Suzanne—no, he shall not! He shall marry me when I am old enough! I shall never love any one half so much.' But one evening, ten days before the wedding, you went for a stroll with him in the moonlight before the house—and yonder—under the pine tree, the big pine tree—he kissed you—kissed you—and held you in his arms so long—so long! You remember, don't you? It was probably the first time. You were so pale when you came back to the drawing-room!

"I saw you. I was there in the shrubbery. I was mad with rage! I would have killed you both if I could!

"I said to myself: 'He shall never marry Suzanne—never! He shall marry no one! I could not bear it.' And all at once I began to hate him intensely.

"Then do you know what I did? Listen. I had seen the gardener prepare pellets for killing stray dogs. He would crush a bottle into small pieces with a stone and put the ground glass into a ball of meat.

"I stole a small medicine bottle from mother's room. I ground it fine with a hammer and hid the

glass in my pocket. It was a glistening powder. The next day, when you had made your little cakes, I opened them with a knife and inserted the glass. He ate three. I ate one myself. I threw the six others into the pond. The two swans died three days later. You remember? Oh, don't speak! Listen, listen. I, I alone did not die. But I have always been ill. Listen—he died—you know—listen—that was not the worst. It was afterward, later—always—the most terrible—listen.

"My life, all my life—such torture! I said to myself: 'I will never leave my sister. And on my deathbed I will tell her all.' And now I have told. And I have always thought of this moment—the moment when all would be told. Now it has come. It is terrible—oh!—sister!

"I have always thought, morning and evening, day and night: 'I shall have to tell her some day!' I waited. The horror of it! It is done. Say nothing. Now I am afraid—I am afraid! Oh! Supposing I should see him again, by and by, when I am dead! See him again! Only to think of it! I dare not—yet I must. I am going to die. I want you to forgive me. I insist on it. I cannot meet him without your forgiveness. Oh, tell her to forgive me, Father! Tell her. I implore you! I cannot die without it."

She was silent and lay back, gasping for breath, still plucking at the sheets with her fingers.

Suzanne had hidden her face in her hands and did not move. She was thinking of him whom she had loved so long. What a life of happiness they might have had together! She saw him again in the dim

and distant past—that past forever lost. Beloved dead! how the thought of them rends the heart! Oh! that kiss, his only kiss! She had retained the memory of it in her soul. And, after that, nothing, nothing more throughout her whole existence!

The priest rose suddenly and in a firm, compelling voice said:

"Mademoiselle Suzanne, your sister is dying!"

Then Suzanne, raising her tear-stained face, put her arms round her sister, and kissing her fervently, exclaimed:

"I forgive you, I forgive you, little one!"

COCO

THROUGHOUT the whole countryside the Lucas farm was known as "the Manor." No one knew why. The peasants doubtless attached to this word, "Manor," a meaning of wealth and of splendor, for this farm was undoubtedly the largest, richest and the best managed in the whole neighborhood.

The immense court, surrounded by five rows of magnificent trees, which sheltered the delicate apple trees from the harsh wind of the plain, inclosed in its confines long brick buildings used for storing fodder and grain, beautiful stables built of hard stone and made to accommodate thirty horses, and a red brick residence which looked like a little château.

Thanks for the good care taken, the manure heaps were as little offensive as such things can be; the watch-dogs lived in kennels, and countless poultry paraded through the tall grass.

Every day, at noon, fifteen persons, masters, farmhands and the women folks, seated themselves around the long kitchen table where the soup was brought in steaming in a large, blue-flowered bowl.

The beasts—horses, cows, pigs and sheep—were fat, well fed and clean. Maitre Lucas, a tall man who was getting stout, would go round three times

a day, overseeing everything and thinking of everything.

A very old white horse, which the mistress wished to keep until its natural death, because she had brought it up and had always used it, and also because it recalled many happy memories, was housed, through sheer kindness of heart, at the end of the stable.

A young scamp about fifteen years old, Isidore Duval by name, and called, for convenience, Zidore, took care of this pensioner, gave him his measure of oats and fodder in winter, and in summer was supposed to change his pasturing place four times a day, so that he might have plenty of fresh grass.

The animal, almost crippled, lifted with difficulty his legs, large at the knees and swollen above the hoofs. His coat, which was no longer curried, looked like white hair, and his long eyelashes gave to his eyes a sad expression.

When Zidore took the animal to pasture, he had to pull on the rope with all his might, because it walked so slowly; and the youth, bent over and out of breath, would swear at it, exasperated at having to care for this old nag.

The farmhands, noticing the young rascal's anger against Coco, were amused and would continually talk of the horse to Zidore, in order to exasperate him. His comrades would make sport with him. In the village he was called Coco-Zidore.

The boy would fume, feeling an unholy desire to revenge himself on the horse. He was a thin, long-legged, dirty child, with thick, coarse, bristly red hair. He seemed only half-witted, and stuttered as

though ideas were unable to form in his thick, brute-like mind.

For a long time he had been unable to understand why Coco should be kept, indignant at seeing things wasted on this useless beast. Since the horse could no longer work, it seemed to him unjust that he should be fed; he revolted at the idea of wasting oats, oats which were so expensive, on this paralyzed old plug. And often, in spite of the orders of Maitre Lucas, he would economize on the nag's food, only giving him half measure. Hatred grew in his confused, childlike mind, the hatred of a stingy, mean, fierce, brutal and cowardly peasant.

When summer came he had to move the animal about in the pasture. It was some distance away. The rascal, angrier every morning, would start, with his dragging step, across the wheat fields. The men working in the fields would shout to him, jokingly:

"Hey, Zidore, remember me to Coco."

He would not answer; but on the way he would break off a switch, and, as soon as he had moved the old horse, he would let it begin grazing; then, treacherously sneaking up behind it, he would slash its legs. The animal would try to escape, to kick, to get away from the blows, and run around in a circle about its rope, as though it had been inclosed in a circus ring. And the boy would slash away furiously, running along behind, his teeth clenched in anger.

Then he would go away slowly, without turning round, while the horse watched him disappear, his ribs sticking out, panting as a result of his unusual

exertions. Not until the blue blouse of the young peasant was out of sight would he lower his thin white head to the grass.

As the nights were now warm, Coco was allowed to sleep out of doors, in the field behind the little wood. Zidore alone went to see him.

The boy threw stones at him to amuse himself. He would sit down on an embankment about ten feet away and would stay there about half an hour, from time to time throwing a sharp stone at the old horse, which remained standing tied before his enemy, watching him continually and not daring to eat before he was gone.

This one thought persisted in the mind of the young scamp: "Why feed this horse, which is no longer good for anything?" It seemed to him that this old nag was stealing the food of the others, the goods of man and God, that he was even robbing him, Zidore, who was working.

Then, little by little, each day, the boy began to shorten the length of rope which allowed the horse to graze.

The hungry animal was growing thinner, and starving. Too feeble to break his bonds, he would stretch his head out toward the tall, green, tempting grass, so near that he could smell, and yet so far that he could not touch it.

But one morning Zidore had an idea: it was, not to move Coco any more. He was tired of walking so far for that old skeleton.

He came, however, in order to enjoy his vengeance. The beast watched him anxiously. He did not beat him that day. He walked around him with his hands in his pockets. He even pretended

to change his place, but he sank the stake in exactly the same hole, and went away overjoyed with his invention.

The horse, seeing him leave, neighed to call him back; but the rascal began to run, leaving him alone, entirely alone in his field, well tied down and without a blade of grass within reach.

Starving, he tried to reach the grass which he could touch with the end of his nose. He got on his knees, stretching out his neck and his long, drooling lips. All in vain. The old animal spent the whole day in useless, terrible efforts. The sight of all that green food, which stretched out on all sides of him, served to increase the gnawing pangs of hunger.

The scamp did not return that day. He wandered through the woods in search of nests.

The next day he appeared upon the scene again. Coco, exhausted, had lain down. When he saw the boy, he got up, expecting at last to have his place changed.

But the little peasant did not even touch the mallet, which was lying on the ground. He came nearer, looked at the animal, threw at his head a clump of earth which flattened out against the white hair, and he started off again, whistling.

The horse remained standing as long as he could see him; then, knowing that his attempts to reach the near-by grass would be hopeless, he once more lay down on his side and closed his eyes.

The following day Zidore did not come.

When he did come at last, he found Coco still stretched out; he saw that he was dead.

Then he remained standing, looking at him,

pleased with what he had done, surprised that it should already be all over. He touched him with his foot, lifted one of his legs and then let it drop, sat on him and remained there, his eyes fixed on the grass, thinking of nothing. He returned to the farm, but did not mention the accident, because he wished to wander about at the hours when he used to change the horse's pasture.

He went to see him the next day. At his approach some crows flew away. Countless flies were walking over the body and were buzzing around it.

When he returned home, he announced the event. The animal was so old that nobody was surprised. The master said to two of the men:

"Take your shovels and dig a hole right where he is."

The men buried the horse at the place where he had died of hunger.

And the grass grew thick, green and vigorous, fed by the poor body.

DEAD WOMAN'S SECRET

THE woman had died without pain, quietly, as a woman should whose life had been blameless. Now she was resting in her bed, lying on her back, her eyes closed, her features calm, her long white hair carefully arranged as though she had done it up ten minutes before dying. The whole pale countenance of the dead woman was so collected, so calm, so resigned that one could feel what a sweet soul had lived in that body, what a quiet existence this old soul had led, how easy and pure the death of this parent had been.

Kneeling beside the bed, her son, a magistrate with inflexible principles, and her daughter, Marguerite, known as Sister Eulalie, were weeping as though their hearts would break. She had, from childhood up, armed them with a strict moral code, teaching them religion, without weakness, and duty, without compromise. He, the man, had become a judge and handled the law as a weapon with which he smote the weak ones without pity. She, the girl, influenced by the virtue which had bathed her in this austere family, had become the bride of the Church through her loathing for man.

They had hardly known their father, knowing only that he had made their mother most unhappy, without being told any other details.

The nun was wildly kissing the dead woman's

hand, an ivory hand as white as the large crucifix lying across the bed. On the other side of the long body the other hand seemed still to be holding the sheet in the death grasp; and the sheet had preserved the little creases as a memory of those last movements which precede eternal immobility.

A few light taps on the door caused the two sobbing heads to look up, and the priest, who had just come from dinner, returned. He was red and out of breath from his interrupted digestion, for he had made himself a strong mixture of coffee and brandy in order to combat the fatigue of the last few nights and of the wake which was beginning.

He looked sad, with that assumed sadness of the priest for whom death is a bread winner. He crossed himself and approaching with his professional gesture: "Well, my poor children! I have come to help you pass these last sad hours." But Sister Eulalie suddenly arose. "Thank you, father, but my brother and I prefer to remain alone with her. This is our last chance to see her, and we wish to be together, all three of us, as we—we—used to be when we were small and our poor mo—mother——" Grief and tears stopped her; she could not continue.

Once more serene, the priest bowed, thinking of his bed. "As you wish, my children." He kneeled, crossed himself, prayed, arose and went out quietly, murmuring: "She was a saint!"

They remained alone, the dead woman and her children. The ticking of the clock, hidden in the shadow, could be heard distinctly, and through the open window drifted in the sweet smell of hay and of woods, together with the soft moonlight. No

other noise could be heard over the land except the occasional croaking of the frog or the chirping of some belated insect. An infinite peace, a divine melancholy, a silent serenity surrounded this dead woman, seemed to be breathed out from her and to appease nature itself.

Then the judge, still kneeling, his head buried in the bed clothes, cried in a voice altered by grief and deadened by the sheets and blankets: "Mamma, mamma, mamma!" And his sister, frantically striking her forehead against the woodwork, convulsed, twitching and trembling as in an epileptic fit, moaned: "Jesus, Jesus, mamma, Jesus!" And both of them, shaken by a storm of grief, gasped and choked.

The crisis slowly calmed down and they began to weep quietly, just as on the sea when a calm follows a squall.

A rather long time passed and they arose and looked at their dead. And the memories, those distant memories, yesterday so dear, to-day so torturing, came to their minds with all the little forgotten details, those little intimate familiar details which bring back to life the one who has left. They recalled to each other circumstances, words, smiles, intonations of the mother who was no longer to speak to them. They saw her again happy and calm. They remembered things which she had said, and a little motion of the hand, like beating time, which she often used when emphasizing something important.

And they loved her as they never had loved her before. They measured the depth of their grief,

and thus they discovered how lonely they would find themselves.

It was their prop, their guide, their whole youth, all the best part of their lives which was disappearing. It was their bond with life, their mother, their mamma, the connecting link with their forefathers which they would thenceforth miss. They now became solitary, lonely beings; they could no longer look back.

The nun said to her brother: "You remember how mamma used always to read her old letters; they are all there in that drawer. Let us, in turn, read them; let us live her whole life through tonight beside her! It would be like a road to the cross, like making the acquaintance of her mother, of our grandparents, whom we never knew, but whose letters are there and of whom she so often spoke, do you remember?"

Out of the drawer they took about ten little packages of yellow paper, tied with care and arranged one beside the other. They threw these relics on the bed and chose one of them on which the word "Father" was written. They opened and read it.

It was one of those old-fashioned letters which one finds in old family desk drawers, those epistles which smell of another century. The first one started: "My dear," another one: "My beautiful little girl," others: "My dear child," or: "My dear daughter." And suddenly the nun began to read aloud, to read over to the dead woman her whole history, all her tender memories. The judge, resting his elbow on the bed, was listening with his eyes

fastened on his mother. The motionless body seemed happy.

Sister Eulalie, interrupting herself, said suddenly: "These ought to be put in the grave with her; they ought to be used as a shroud and she ought to be buried in it." She took another package, on which no name was written. She began to read in a firm voice: "My adored one, I love you wildly. Since yesterday I have been suffering the tortures of the damned, haunted by our memory. I feel your lips against mine, your eyes in mine, your breast against mine. I love you, I love you! You have driven me mad. My arms open, I gasp, moved by a wild desire to hold you again. My whole soul and body cries out for you, wants you. I have kept in my mouth the taste of your kisses——"

The judge had straightened himself up. The nun stopped reading. He snatched the letter from her and looked for the signature. There was none, but only under the words, "The man who adores you," the name "Henry." Their father's name was René. Therefore this was not from him. The son then quickly rummaged through the package of letters, took one out and read: "I can no longer live without your caresses——" Standing erect, severe as when sitting on the bench, he looked unmoved at the dead woman. The nun, straight as a statue, tears trembling in the corners of her eyes, was watching her brother, waiting. Then he crossed the room slowly, went to the window and stood there, gazing out into the dark night.

When he turned around again Sister Eulalie, her eyes dry now, was still standing near the bed, her head bent down.

He stepped forward, quickly picked up the letters and threw them pell-mell back into the drawer. Then he closed the curtains of the bed.

When daylight made the candles on the table turn pale the son slowly left his armchair, and without looking again at the mother upon whom he had passed sentence, severing the tie that united her to son and daughter, he said slowly: "Let us now retire, sister."

A HUMBLE DRAMA

MEETINGS that are unexpected constitute the charm of traveling. Who has not experienced the joy of suddenly coming across a Parisian, a college friend, or a neighbor, five hundred miles from home? Who has not passed a night awake in one of those small, rattling country stage-coaches, in regions where steam is still a thing unknown, beside a strange young woman, of whom one has caught only a glimpse in the dim light of the lantern, as she entered the carriage in front of a white house in some small country town?

And the next morning, when one's head and ears feel numb with the continuous tinkling of the bells and the loud rattling of the windows, what a charming sensation it is to see your pretty neighbor open her eyes, startled, glance around her, arrange her rebellious hair with her slender fingers, adjust her hat, feel with sure hand whether her corset is still in place, her waist straight, and her skirt not too wrinkled!

She glances at you coldly and curiously. Then she leans back and no longer seems interested in anything but the country.

In spite of yourself, you watch her; and in spite of yourself you keep on thinking of her. Who is she? Whence does she come? Where is she going? In spite of yourself you spin a little romance around

her. She is pretty; she seems charming! Happy he who . . . Life might be delightful with her. Who knows? She is perhaps the woman of our dreams, the one suited to our disposition, the one for whom our heart calls.

And how delicious even the disappointment at seeing her get out at the gate of a country house! A man stands there, who is awaiting her, with two children and two maids. He takes her in his arms and kisses as he lifts her out. Then she stoops over the little ones, who hold up their hands to her; she kisses them tenderly; and then they all go away together, down a path, while the maids catch the packages which the driver throws down to them from the coach.

Adieu! It is all over. You never will see her again! Adieu to the young woman who has passed the night by your side. You know her no more, you have not spoken to her; all the same, you feel a little sad to see her go. Adieu!

I have had many of these souvenirs of travel, some joyous and some sad.

Once I was in Auvergne, tramping through those delightful French mountains, that are not too high, not too steep, but friendly and familiar. I had climbed the Sancy, and entered a little inn, near a pilgrim's chapel called Notre-Dame de Vassivière, when I saw a queer, ridiculous-looking old woman breakfasting alone at the end table.

She was at least seventy years old, tall, skinny, and angular, and her white hair was puffed around her temples in the old-fashioned style. She was dressed like a traveling Englishwoman, in awkward, queer clothing, like a person who is indifferent to

dress. She was eating an omelet and drinking water.

Her face was peculiar, with restless eyes and the expression of one with whom fate has dealt unkindly. I watched her, in spite of myself, thinking: "Who is she? What is the life of this woman? Why is she wandering alone through these mountains?"

She paid and rose to leave, drawing up over her shoulders an astonishing little shawl, the two ends of which hung over her arms. From a corner of the room she took an alpenstock, which was covered with names traced with a hot iron; then she went out, straight, erect, with the long steps of a letter-carrier who is setting out on his route.

A guide was waiting for her at the door, and both went away. I watched them go down the valley, along the road marked by a line of high wooden crosses. She was taller than her companion, and seemed to walk faster than he.

Two hours later I was climbing the edge of the deep funnel that incloses Lake Pavin in a marvelous and enormous basin of verdure, full of trees, bushes, rocks, and flowers. This lake is so round that it seems as if the outline had been drawn with a pair of compasses, so clear and blue that one might deem it a flood of azure come down from the sky, so charming that one would like to live in a hut on the wooded slope which dominates this crater, where the cold, still water is sleeping.

The Englishwoman was standing there like a statue, gazing upon the transparent sheet down in the dead volcano. She was straining her eyes to penetrate below the surface down to the unknown

depths, where monstrous trout which have devoured all the other fish are said to live. As I was passing close by her, it seemed to me that two big tears were brimming her eyes. But she departed at a great pace, to rejoin her guide, who had stayed behind in an inn at the foot of the path leading to the lake.

I did not see her again that day.

The next day, at nightfall, I came to the château of Murol. The old fortress, an enormous tower standing on a peak in the midst of a large valley, where three valleys intersect, rears its brown, uneven, cracked surface into the sky; it is round, from its large circular base to the crumbling turrets on its pinnacles.

It astonishes the eye more than any other ruin by its simple mass, its majesty, its grave and imposing air of antiquity. It stands there, alone, high as a mountain, a dead queen, but still the queen of the valleys stretched out beneath it. You go up by a slope planted with firs, then you enter a narrow gate, and stop at the foot of the walls, in the first inclosure, in full view of the entire country.

Inside there are ruined halls, crumbling stairways, unknown cavities, dungeons, walls cut through in the middle, vaulted roofs held up one knows not how, and a mass of stones and crevices, overgrown with grass, where animals glide in and out.

I was exploring this ruin alone.

Suddenly I perceived behind a bit of wall a being, a kind of phantom, like the spirit of this ancient and crumbling habitation.

I was taken aback with surprise, almost with

fear, when I recognized the old lady whom I had seen twice.

She was weeping, with big tears in her eyes, and held her handkerchief in her hand.

I turned around to go away, when she spoke to me, apparently ashamed to have been surprised in her grief.

"Yes, monsieur, I am crying. That does not happen often to me."

"Pardon me, madame, for having disturbed you," I stammered, confused, not knowing what to say. "Some misfortune has doubtless come to you."

"Yes. No—I am like a lost dog," she murmured, and began to sob, with her handkerchief over her eyes.

Moved by these contagious tears, I took her hand, trying to calm her.

Then brusquely she told me her history, as if no longer able to bear her grief alone.

"Oh! Oh! Monsieur—if you knew—the sorrow in which I live—in what sorrow.

"Once I was happy. I have a house down there—a home. I cannot go back to it any more; I shall never go back to it again, it is too hard to bear.

"I have a son. It is he! it is he! Children don't know. Oh, one has such a short time to live! If I should see him now I should perhaps not recognize him. How I loved him? How I loved him! Even before he was born, when I felt him move. And after that! How I have kissed and caressed and cherished him! If you knew how many nights I have passed in watching him sleep, and how many in thinking of him. I was crazy about him. When

he was eight years old his father sent him to boarding-school. That was the end. He no longer belonged to me. Oh, heavens! He came to see me every Sunday. That was all!

"He went to college in Paris. Then he came only four times a year, and every time I was astonished to see how he had changed, to find him taller without having seen him grow. They stole his childhood from me, his confidence, and his love which otherwise would not have gone away from me; they stole my joy in seeing him grow, in seeing him become a little man.

"I saw him four times a year. Think of it! And at every one of his visits his body, his eye, his movements, his voice his laugh, were no longer the same, were no longer mine. All these things change so quickly in a child; and it is so sad if one is not there to see them change; one no longer recognizes him.

"One year he came with down on his cheek! He! my son! I was dumfounded—would you believe it? I hardly dared to kiss him. Was it really he, my little, little curly head of old, my dear, dear child, whom I had held in his diapers on my knee, and who had nursed at my breast with his little greedy lips—was it he, this tall, brown boy, who no longer knew how to kiss me, who seemed to love me as a matter of duty, who called me 'mother' for the sake of politeness, and who kissed me on the forehead, when I felt like crushing him in my arms?

"My husband died. Then my parents, and then my two sisters. When Death enters a house it seems as if he were hurrying to do his utmost, so as not

to have to return for a long time after that. He spares only one or two to mourn the others.

"I remained alone. My tall son was then studying law. I was hoping to live and die near him, and I went to him so that we could live together. But he had fallen into the ways of young men, and he gave me to understand that I was in his way. So I left. I was wrong in doing so, but I suffered too much in feeling myself in his way, I, his mother! And I came back home.

"I hardly ever saw him again.

'He married. What a joy! At last we should be together for good. I should have grandchildren. His wife was an Englishwoman, who took a dislike to me. Why? Perhaps she thought that I loved him too much.

"Again I was obliged to go away. And I was alone. Yes, monsieur.

"Then he went to England, to live with them, with his wife's parents. Do you understand? They have him—they have my son for themselves. They have stolen him from me. He writes to me once a month. At first he came to see me. But now he no longer comes.

"It is now four years since I saw him last. His face then was wrinkled and his hair white. Was that possible? This man, my son, almost an old man? My little rosy child of old? No doubt I shall never see him again.

"And so I travel about all the year. I go east and west, as you see, with no companion.

"I am like a lost dog. Adieu, monsieur! don't stay here with me for it hurts me to have told you all this."

I went down the hill, and on turning round to glance back, I saw the old woman standing on a broken wall, looking out upon the mountains, the long valley and Lake Chambon in the distance.

And her skirt and the queer little shawl which she wore around her thin shoulders were fluttering like a flag in the wind.

MADEMOISELLE COCOTTE

WE were just leaving the asylum when I saw a tall, thin man in a corner of the court who kept on calling an imaginary dog. He was crying in a soft, tender voice: "Cocotte! Come here, Cocotte, my beauty!" and slapping his thigh as one does when calling an animal. I asked the physician, "Who is that man?" He answered: "Oh! he is not at all interesting. He is a coachman named François, who became insane after drowning his dog."

I insisted: "Tell me his story. The most simple and humble things are sometimes those which touch our hearts most deeply."

Here is this man's adventure, which was obtained from a friend of his, a groom:

There was a family of rich *bourgeois* who lived in a suburb of Paris. They had a villa in the middle of a park, at the edge of the Seine. Their coachman was this François, a country fellow, somewhat dull, kind-hearted, simple and easy to deceive.

One evening, as he was returning home, a dog began to follow him. At first he paid no attention to it, but the creature's obstinacy at last made him turn round. He looked to see if he knew this dog. No, he had never seen it. It was a female dog and frightfully thin. She was trotting behind him with a mournful and famished look, her tail between her

legs, her ears flattened against her head and stopping and starting whenever he did.

He tried to chase this skeleton away and cried: "Run along! Get out! Kss! kss!" She retreated a few steps, then sat down and waited. And when the coachman started to walk again she followed along behind him.

He pretended to pick up some stones. The animal ran a little farther away, but came back again as soon as the man's back was turned.

Then the coachman François took pity on the beast and called her. The dog approached timidly. The man patted her protruding ribs, moved by the beast's misery, and he cried: "Come! come here!" Immediately she began to wag her tail, and, feeling herself taken in, adopted, she began to run along ahead of her new master.

He made her a bed on the straw in the stable, then he ran to the kitchen for some bread. When she had eaten all she could she curled up and went to sleep.

When his employers heard of this the next day they allowed the coachman to keep the animal. It was a good beast, caressing and faithful, intelligent and gentle.

Nevertheless François adored Cocotte, and he kept repeating: "That beast is human. She only lacks speech."

He had a magnificent red leather collar made for her which bore these words engraved on a copper plate: "Mademoiselle Cocotte, belonging to the coachman François."

She was remarkably prolific and four times a year would give birth to a batch of little animals belong-

ing to every variety of the canine race. François would pick out one which he would leave her and then he would unmercifully throw the others into the river. But soon the cook joined her complaints to those of the gardener. She would find dogs under the stove, in the ice box, in the coal bin, and they would steal everything they came across.

Finally the master, tired of complaints, impatiently ordered François to get rid of Cocotte. In despair the man tried to give her away. Nobody wanted her. Then he decided to lose her, and he gave her to a teamster, who was to drop her on the other side of Paris, near Joinville-le-Pont.

Cocotte returned the same day. Some decision had to be taken. Five francs was given to a train conductor to take her to Havre. He was to drop her there.

Three days later she returned to the stable, thin, footsore and tired out.

The master took pity on her and let her stay. But other dogs were attracted as before, and one evening, when a big dinner party was on, a stuffed turkey was carried away by one of them right under the cook's nose, and she did not dare to stop him.

This time the master completely lost his temper and said angrily to François: "If you don't throw this beast into the water before to-morrow morning, I'll put you out, do you hear?"

The man was dumbfounded, and he returned to his room to pack his trunk, preferring to leave the place. Then he bethought himself that he could find no other situation as long as he dragged this animal about with him. He thought of his good position, where he was well paid and well fed, and he decided

that a dog was really not worth all that. At last he decided to rid himself of Cocotte at daybreak.

He slept badly. He rose at dawn, and taking a strong rope, went to get the dog. She stood up slowly, shook herself, stretched and came to welcome her master.

Then his courage forsook him, and he began to pet her affectionately, stroking her long ears, kissing her muzzle and calling her tender names.

But a neighboring clock struck six. He could no longer hesitate. He opened the door, calling: "Come!" The beast wagged her tail, understanding that she was to be taken out.

They reached the beach, and he chose a place where the water seemed deep. Then he knotted the rope round the leather collar and tied a heavy stone to the other end. He seized Cocotte in his arms and kissed her madly, as though he were taking leave of some human being. He held her to his breast, rocked her and called her "my dear little Cocotte, my sweet little Cocotte," and she grunted with pleasure.

Ten times he tried to throw her into the water and each time he lost courage.

But suddenly he made up his mind and threw her as far from him as he could. At first she tried to swim, as she did when he gave her a bath, but her head, dragged down by the stone, kept going under, and she looked at her master with wild, human glances as she struggled like a drowning person. Then the front part of her body sank, while her hind legs waved wildly out of the water. Finally those also disappeared.

Then, for five minutes, bubbles rose to the surface

as though the river were boiling, and François, haggard, his heart beating, thought that he saw Cocotte struggling in the mud, and, with the simplicity of a peasant, he kept saying to himself: "What does the poor beast think of me now?"

He almost lost his mind. He was ill for a month and every night he dreamed of his dog. He could feel her licking his hands and hear her barking. It was necessary to call in a physician. At last he recovered, and toward the end of June his employers took him to their estate at Biessard, near Rouen.

There again he was near the Seine. He began to take baths. Each morning he would go down with the groom and they would swim across the river.

One day, as they were disporting themselves in the water, François suddenly cried to his companion: "Look what's coming! I'm going to give you a chop!"

It was an enormous, swollen corpse that was floating down with its feet sticking straight up in the air.

François swam up to it, still joking: "Whew! it's not fresh. What a catch, old man! It isn't thin, either!" He kept swimming about at a distance from the animal, that was in a state of decomposition. Then, suddenly, he was silent and looked at it attentively. This time he came near enough to touch it. He looked fixedly at the collar, then he stretched out his arm, seized the neck, swung the corpse round and drew it up close to him and read on the copper, which had turned green and which still stuck to the discolored leather: "Mademoiselle Cocotte, belonging to the coachman François."

The dead dog had come more than a hundred miles to find its master!

He let out a frightful shriek and began to swim for the beach with all his might, still howling; and as soon as he touched land he ran away wildly, stark naked, through the country. He was insane!

THE CORSICAN BANDIT

THE road ascended gently through the forest of Aïtone. The large pines formed a solemn dome above our heads, and that mysterious sound made by the wind in the trees sounded like the notes of an organ.

After walking for three hours, there was a clearing, and then at intervals an enormous pine umbrella, and then we suddenly came to the edge of the forest, some hundred meters below the pass leading to the wild valley of Niolo.

On the two projecting heights which commanded a view of this pass, some old trees, grotesquely twisted, seemed to have mounted with painful efforts, like scouts sent in advance of the multitude in the rear. When we turned round, we saw the entire forest stretched beneath our feet, like a gigantic basin of verdure, inclosed by bare rocks whose summits seemed to reach the sky.

We resumed our walk, and, ten minutes later, found ourselves in the pass.

Then I beheld a remarkable landscape. Beyond another forest stretched a valley, but a valley such as I had never seen before; a solitude of stone, ten leagues long, hollowed out between two high mountains, without a field or a tree to be seen. This was the Niolo valley, the fatherland of Corsican liberty,

the inaccessible citadel, from which the invaders had never been able to drive out the mountaineers.

My companion said to me: "This is where all our bandits have taken refuge?"

Ere long we were at the further end of this gorge, so wild, so inconceivably beautiful.

Not a blade of grass, not a plant—nothing but granite. As far as our eyes could reach, we saw in front of us a desert of glittering stone, heated like an oven by a burning sun, which seemed to hang for that very purpose right above the gorge. When we raised our eyes towards the crests, we stood dazzled and stupefied by what we saw. They looked like a festoon of coral; all the summits are of porphyry; and the sky overhead was violet, purple, tinged with the coloring of these strange mountains. Lower down, the granite was of scintillating gray, and seemed ground to powder beneath our feet. At our right, along a long and irregular course, roared a tumultuous torrent. And we staggered along under this heat, in this light, in this burning, arid, desolate valley cut by this torrent of turbulent water which seemed to be ever hurrying onward, without fertilizing the rocks, lost in this furnace which greedily drank it up without being saturated or refreshed by it.

But, suddenly, there was visible at our right a little wooden cross sunk in a little heap of stones. A man had been killed there; and I said to my companion:

"Tell me about your bandits."

He replied:

"I knew the most celebrated of them, the terrible St. Lucia. I will tell you his history.

"His father was killed in a quarrel by a young man of the district, it is said; and St. Lucia was left alone with his sister. He was a weak, timid youth, small, often ill, without any energy. He did not proclaim vengeance against the assassin of his father. All his relatives came to see him, and implored of him to avenge his death; he remained deaf to their menaces and their supplications.

"Then, following the old Corsican custom, his sister, in her indignation carried away his black clothes, in order that he might not wear mourning for a dead man who had not been avenged. He was insensible to even this affront, and rather than take down from the rack his father's gun, which was still loaded, he shut himself up, not daring to brave the looks of the young men of the district.

"He seemed to have even forgotten the crime, and lived with his sister in the seclusion of their dwelling.

But, one day, the man who was suspected of having committed the murder, was about to get married. St. Lucia did not appear to be moved by this news, but, out of sheer bravado, doubtless, the bridegroom, on his way to the church, passed before the house of the two orphans.

"The brother and the sister, at their window, were eating frijoles, when the young man saw the bridal procession going by. Suddenly he began to tremble, rose to his feet without uttering a word made the sign of the cross, took the gun which was hanging over the fireplace, and went out.

"When he spoke of this later on, he said: 'I don't know what was the matter with me; it was like fire in my blood; I felt that I must do it, that, in spite

of everything, I could not resist, and I concealed the gun in a cave on the road to Corte.'

"An hour later, he came back, with nothing in his hand, and with his habitual air of sad weariness. His sister believed that there was nothing further in his thoughts.

But when night fell he disappeared.

"His enemy had, the same evening, to repair to Corte on foot, accompanied by his two groomsmen.

"He was walking along, singing as he went, when St. Lucia stood before him, and looking straight in the murderer's face, exclaimed: 'Now is the time!' and shot him point-blank in the chest.

"One of the men fled; the other stared at the young man, saying:

"'What have you done, St. Lucia?' and he was about to hasten to Corte for help, when St. Lucia said in a stern tone:

"'If you move another step, I'll shoot you in the leg.'

"The other, aware of his timidity hitherto, replied: 'You would not dare to do it!' and was hurrying off when he fell instantaneously, his thigh shattered by a bullet.

"And St. Lucia, coming over to where he lay, said:

"'I am going to look at your wound; if it is not serious, I'll leave you there; if it is mortal I'll finish you off."

"He inspected the wound, considered it mortal, and slowly reloading his gun, told the wounded man to say a prayer, and shot him through the head.

"Next day he was in the mountains.

"And do you know what this St. Lucia did after this?

"All his family were arrested by the gendarmes. His uncle, the curé, who was suspected of having incited him to this deed of vengeance, was himself put in prison, and accused by the dead man's relatives. But he escaped, took a gun in his turn, and went to join his nephew in the brush.

"Next, St. Lucia killed, one after the other, his uncle's accusers, and tore out their eyes to teach the others never to state what they had seen with their eyes.

"He killed all the relatives, all the connections of his enemy's family. He slew during his life fourteen gendarmes, burned down the houses of his adversaries, and was, up to the day of his death, the most terrible of all the bandits whose memory we have preserved."

* * * * * * *

The sun disappeared behind Monte Cinto and the tall shadow of the granite mountain went to sleep on the granite of the valley. We quickened our pace in order to reach before night the little village of Albertaccio, nothing but a pile of stoines welded into the stone flanks of a wild gorge. And I said as I thought of the bandit:

"What a terrible custom your vendetta is!"

My companion answered with an air of resignation:

"What would you have? A man must do his duty!"

THE GRAVE

THE seventeenth of July, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-three, at half-past two in the morning, the watchman in the cemetery of Bésiers, who lived in a small cottage on the edge of this field of the dead, was awakened by the barking of his dog, which was shut up in the kitchen.

Going down quickly, he saw the animal sniffing at the crack of the door and barking furiously, as if some tramp had been sneaking about the house. The keeper, Vincent, therefore took his gun and went out.

His dog, preceding him, at once ran in the direction of the Avenue Général Bonnet, stopping short at the monument of Madame Tomoiseau.

The keeper, advancing cautiously, soon saw a faint light on the side of the Avenue Malenvers, and stealing in among the graves, he came upon a horrible act of profanation.

A man had dug up the coffin of a young woman who had been buried the evening before and was dragging the corpse out of it.

A small dark lantern, standing on a pile of earth, lighted up this hideous scene.

Vincent sprang upon the wretch, threw him to the ground, bound his hands and took him to the police station.

It was a young, wealthy and respected lawyer in town, named Courbataille.

He was brought into court. The public prosecutor opened the case by referring to the monstrous deeds of the Sergeant Bertrand.

A wave of indignation swept over the courtroom. When the magistrate sat down the crowd assembled cried: "Death! death!" With difficulty the presiding judge established silence.

Then he said gravely:

"Defendant, what have you to say in your defense?"

Courbataille, who had refused counsel, rose. He was a handsome fellow, tall, brown, with a frank face, energetic manner and a fearless eye.

Paying no attention to the whistlings in the room, he began to speak in a voice that was low and veiled at first, but that grew more firm as he proceeded.

"Monsieur le Président, gentlemen of the jury: I have very little to say. The woman whose grave I violated was my sweetheart. I loved her.

"I loved her, not with a sensual love and not with mere tenderness of heart and soul, but with an absolute, complete love, with an overpowering passion.

"Hear me:

"When I met her for the first time I felt a strange sensation. It was not astonishment nor admiration, nor yet that which is called love at first sight, but a feeling of delicious well-being, as if I had been plunged into a warm bath. Her gestures seduced me, her voice enchanted me, and it was with infinite

pleasure that I looked upon her person. It seemed to me as if I had seen her before and as if I had known her a long time. She had within her something of my spirit.

"She seemed to me like an answer to a cry uttered by my soul, to that vague and unceasing cry with which we call upon Hope during our whole life.

"When I knew her a little better, the mere thought of seeing her again filled me with exquisite and profound uneasiness; the touch of her hand in mine was more delightful to me than anything that I had imagined; her smile filled me with a mad joy, with the desire to run, to dance, to fling myself upon the ground.

"So we became lovers.

"Yes, more than that: she was my very life. I looked for nothing further on earth, and had no further desires. I longed for nothing further.

"One evening, when we had gone on a somewhat long walk by the river, we were overtaken by the rain, and she caught cold. It developed into pneumonia the next day, and a week later she was dead.

"During the hours of her suffering astonishment and consternation prevented my understanding and reflecting upon it, but when she was dead I was so overwhelmed by blank despair that I had no thoughts left. I wept.

"During all the horrible details of the interment my keen and wild grief was like a madness, a kind of sensual, physical grief.

"Then when she was gone, when she was under the earth, my mind at once found itself again, and I passed through a series of moral sufferings so ter-

rible that even the love she had vouchsafed to me was dear at that price.

"Then the fixed idea came to me: I shall not see her again.

"When one dwells on this thought for a whole day one feels as if he were going mad. Just think of it! There is a woman whom you adore, a unique woman, for in the whole universe there is not a second one like her. This woman has given herself to you and has created with you the mysterious union that is called Love. Her eye seems to you more vast than space, more charming than the world, that clear eye smiling with her tenderness. This woman loves you. When she speaks to you her voice floods you with joy.

"And suddenly she disappears! Think of it! She disappears, not only for you, but forever. She is dead. Do you understand what that means? Never, never, never, not anywhere will she exist any more. Nevermore will that eye look upon anything again; nevermore will that voice, nor any voice like it, utter a word in the same way as she uttered it.

"Nevermore will a face be born that is like hers. Never, never! The molds of statues are kept; casts are kept by which one can make objects with the same outlines and forms. But that one body and that one face will never more be born again upon the earth. And yet millions and millions of creatures will be born, and more than that, and this one woman will not reappear among all the women of the future. Is it possible? It drives one mad to think of it.

"She lived for twenty years, not more, and she has disappeared forever, forever, forever! She

thought, she smiled, she loved me. And now nothing! The flies that die in the autumn are as much as we are in this world. And now nothing! And I thought that her body, her fresh body, so warm, so sweet, so white, so lovely, would rot down there in that box under the earth. And her soul, her thought, her love—where is it?

"Not to see her again! The idea of this decomposing body, that I might yet recognize, haunted me. I wanted to look at it once more.

"I went out with a spade, a lantern and a hammer. I jumped over the cemetery wall and I found the grave, which had not yet been closed entirely; I uncovered the coffin and took up a board. An abominable odor, the stench of putrefaction, greeted my nostrils. Oh, her bed perfumed with orris!

"Yet I opened the coffin, and, holding my lighted lantern down into it, I saw her. Her face was blue, swollen, frightful. A black liquid had oozed out of her mouth.

"She! That was she! Horror seized me. But I stretched out my arm to draw this monstrous face toward me. And then I was caught.

"All night I have retained the foul odor of this putrid body, the odor of my well beloved, as one retains the perfume of a woman after a love embrace.

"Do with me what you will."

A strange silence seemed to oppress the room. They seemed to be waiting for something more. The jury retired to deliberate.

When they came back a few minutes later the accused showed no fear and did not even seem to think.

The president announced with the usual formalities that his judges declared him to be not guilty.

He did not move and the room applauded.

The Grave appeared in Gil Blas, July 29, 1883, under the signature of "Maufrigneuse."

THE ENGLISHMAN OF ÉTRETAT

A GREAT English poet has just crossed over to France in order to greet Victor Hugo. All the newspapers are full of his name and he is the great topic of conversation in all drawing-rooms. Fifteen years ago I had occasion several times to meet Algernon Charles Swinburne. I will attempt to show him just as I saw him and to give an idea of the strange impression he made on me, which will remain with me throughout time.

I believe it was in 1867 or in 1868 that an unknown young Englishman came to Étretat and bought a little hut hidden under great trees. It was said that he lived there, always alone, in a strange manner; and he aroused the inimical surprise of the natives, for the inhabitants were sullen and foolishly malicious, as they always are in little towns.

They declared that this whimsical Englishman ate nothing but boiled, roasted or stewed monkey; that he would see no one; that he talked to himself hours at a time and many other surprising things that made people think that he was different from other men. They were surprised that he should live alone with a monkey Had it been a cat or a dog they would have said nothing. But a monkey! Was that not frightful? What savage tastes the man must have!

I knew this young man only from seeing him in the streets. He was short, plump without being fat, mild-looking, and he wore a little blond mustache, which was almost invisible.

Chance brought us together. This savage had amiable and pleasing manners, but he was one of those strange Englishmen that one meets here and there throughout the world.

Endowed with remarkable intelligence, he seemed to live in a fantastic dream, as Edgar Poe must have lived. He had translated into English a volume of strange Icelandic legends, which I ardently desired to see translated into French. He loved the supernatural, the dismal and grewsome, but he spoke of the most marvellous things with a calmness that was typically English, to which his gentle and quiet voice gave a semblance of reality that was maddening.

Full of a haughty disdain for the world, with its conventions, prejudices and code of morality, he had nailed to his house a name that was boldly impudent. The keeper of a lonely inn who should write on his door: "Travellers murdered here!" could not make a more sinister jest. I never had entered his dwelling, when one day I received an invitation to luncheon, following an accident that had occurred to one of his friends, who had been almost drowned and whom I had attempted to rescue.

Although I was unable to reach the man until he had already been rescued, I received the hearty thanks of the two Englishmen, and the following day I called upon them.

The friend was a man about thirty years old. He bore an enormous head on a child's body—a body

without chest or shoulders. An immense forehead, which seemed to have engulfed the rest of the man, expanded like a dome above a thin face which ended in a little pointed beard. Two sharp eyes and a peculiar mouth gave one the impression of the head of a reptile, while the magnificent brow suggested a genius.

A nervous twitching shook this peculiar being, who walked, moved, acted by jerks like a broken spring.

This was Algernon Charles Swinburne, son of an English admiral and grandson, on the maternal side, of the Earl of Ashburnham.

He strange countenance was transfigured when he spoke. I have seldom seen a man more impressive, more eloquent, incisive or charming in conversation. His rapid, clear, piercing and fantastic imagination seemed to creep into his voice and to lend life to his words. His brusque gestures enlivened his speech, which penetrated one like a dagger, and he had bursts of thought, just as lighthouses throw out flashes of fire, great, genial lights that seemed to illuminate a whole world of ideas.

The home of the two friends was pretty and by no means commonplace. Everywhere were paintings, some superb, some strange, representing different conceptions of insanity. Unless I am mistaken, there was a water-color which represented the head of a dead man floating in a rose-colored shell on a boundless ocean, under a moon with a human face.

Here and there I came across bones. I clearly remember a flayed hand on which was hanging some

dried skin and black muscles, and on the snow-white bones could be seen the traces of dried blood.

The food was a riddle which I could not solve. Was it good? Was it bad? I could not say. Some roast monkey took away all desire to make a steady diet of this animal, and the great monkey who roamed about among us at large and playfully pushed his head into my glass when I wished to drink cured me of any desire I might have to take one of his brothers as a companion for the rest of my days.

As for the two men, they gave me the impression of two strange, original, remarkable minds, belonging to that peculiar race of talented madmen from among whom have arisen Poe, Hoffmann and many others.

If genius is, as is commonly believed, a sort of aberration of great minds, then Algernon Charles Swinburne is undoubtedly a genius.

Great minds that are healthy are never considered geniuses, while this sublime qualification is lavished on brains that are often inferior but are slightly touched by madness.

At any rate, this poet remains one of the first of his time, through his originality and polished form. He is an exalted lyrical singer who seldom bothers about the good and humble truth, which French poets are now seeking so persistently and patiently. He strives to set down dreams, subtle thoughts, sometimes great, sometimes visibly forced, but sometimes magnificent.

Two years later I found the house closed and its tenants gone. The furniture was being sold. In

memory of them I bought the hideous flayed hand. On the grass an enormous square block of granite bore this simple word: "Nip." Above this a hollow stone offered water to the birds. It was the grave of the monkey, who had been hanged by a young, vindictive negro servant. It was said that this violent domestic had been forced to flee at the point of his exasperated master's revolver. After wandering about without home or food for several days, he returned and began to peddle barley-sugar in the streets. He was expelled from the country after he had almost strangled a displeased customer.

The world would be gayer if one could often meet homes like that.

This story appeared in the "Gaulois," November 29, 1882. It was the original sketch for the introductory study of Swinburne, written by Maupassant for the French translation by Gabriel Mourey of "Poems and Ballads."

MAGNETISM

IT was a men's dinner party, and they were sitting over their cigars and brandy and discussing magnetism. Donato's tricks and Charcot's experiments. Presently, the sceptical, easy-going men, who cared nothing for religion of any sort, began telling stories of strange occurrences, incredible things which, nevertheless, had really occurred, so they said, falling back into superstitious beliefs, clinging to these last remnants of the marvellous, becoming devotees of this mystery of magnetism, defending it in the name of science. There was only one person who smiled, a vigorous young fellow, a great ladies' man who was so incredulous that he would not even enter upon a discussion of such matters.

He repeated with a sneer:

"Humbug! humbug! humbug! We need not discuss Donato, who is merely a very smart juggler. As for M. Charcot, who is said to be a remarkable man of science, he produces on me the effect of those story-tellers of the school of Edgar Poe, who end by going mad through constantly reflecting on queer cases of insanity. He has authenticated some cases of unexplained and inexplicable nervous phenomena; he makes his way into that unknown region which men are exploring every day, and unable always to understand what he sees, he recalls,

perhaps, the ecclesiastical interpretation of these mysteries. I should like to hear what he says himself."

The words of the unbeliever were listened to with a kind of pity, as if he had blasphemed in an assembly of monks.

One of these gentlemen exclaimed:

"And yet miracles were performed in olden times."

"I deny it," replied the other. "Why cannot they be performed now?"

Then, each mentioned some fact, some fantastic presentiment, some instance of souls communicating with each other across space, or some case of the secret influence of one being over another. They asserted and maintained that these things had actually occurred, while the sceptic angrily repeated:

"Humbug! humbug! humbug!"

At last he rose, threw away his cigar, and with his hands in his pockets, said: "Well, I also have two stories to tell you, which I will afterwards explain. Here they are:

"In the little village of Étretat, the men, who are all seafaring folk, go every year to Newfoundland to fish for cod. One night the little son of one of these fishermen woke up with a start, crying out that his father was dead. The child was quieted, and again he woke up exclaiming that his father was drowned. A month later the news came that his father had, in fact, been swept off the deck of his smack by a billow. The widow then remembered how her son had woke up and spoken of his father's death. Everyone said it was a miracle, and the affair caused a great sensation. The dates were

compared, and it was found that the accident and the dream were almost coincident, whence they concluded that they had happened on the same night and at the same hour. And there is a mystery of magnetism."

The story-teller stopped suddenly.

Thereupon, one of those who had heard him, much affected by the narrative, asked:

"And can you explain this?"

"Perfectly, monsieur. I have discovered the secret. The circumstance surprised me and even perplexed me very much; but you see, I do not believe on principle. Just as others begin by believing, I begin by doubting; and when I cannot understand, I continue to deny that there can be any telepathic communication between souls, certain that my own intelligence will be able to explain it. Well, I kept on inquiring into the matter, and by dint of questioning all the wives of the absent seamen, I was convinced that not a week passed without one of them, or one of their children dreaming and declaring when they woke up that the father was drowned. The horrible and continual fear of this accident makes them always talk about it. Now, if one of these frequent predictions coincides, by a very simple chance, with the death of the person referred to, people at once declare it to be a miracle; for they suddenly lose sight of all the other predictions of misfortune that have remained unfulfilled. I have myself known fifty cases where the persons who made the prediction forgot all about it a week afterwards. But, if, then one happens to die, then the recollection of the thing is immediately revived, and people are ready to believe in the intervention of

God, according to some, and magnetism, according to others."

One of the smokers remarked:

"What you say is right enough; but what about your second story?"

"Oh! my second story is a very delicate matter to relate. It happened to myself, and so I don't place any great value on my own view of the matter. An interested party can never give an impartial opinion. However, here it is:

"Among my acquaintances was a young woman on whom I had never bestowed a thought, whom I had never even looked at attentively, never taken any notice of.

"I classed her among the women of no importance, though she was not bad-looking; she appeared, in fact, to possess eyes, a nose, a mouth, some sort of hair—just a colorless type of countenance. She was one of those beings who awaken only a chance, passing thought, but no special interest, no desire.

"Well, one night, as I was writing some letters by my fireside before going to bed, I was conscious, in the midst of that train of sensuous visions that sometimes pass through one's brain in moments of idle reverie, of a kind of slight influence, passing over me, a little flutter of the heart, and immediately, without any cause, without any logical connection of thought, I saw distinctly, as if I were touching her, saw from head to foot, and disrobed, this young woman to whom I had never given more that three seconds' thought at a time. I suddenly discovered in her a number of qualities which I had never before observed, a sweet charm, a languorous

fascination; she awakened in me that sort of restless emotion that causes one to pursue a woman. But I did not think of her long. I went to bed and was soon asleep. And I dreamed.

"You have all had these strange dreams which make you overcome the impossible, which open to you double-locked doors, unexpected joys, tightly folded arms?

"Which of us in these troubled, exciting, breathless slumbers, has not held, clasped, embraced with rapture, the woman who occupied his thoughts? And have you ever noticed what superhuman delight these happy dreams give us? Into what mad intoxication they cast you! with what passionate spasms they shake you! and with what infinite, caressing, penetrating tenderness they fill your heart for her whom you hold clasped in your arms in that adorable illusion that is so like reality!

"All this I felt with unforgettable violence. This woman was mine, so much mine that the pleasant warmth of her skin remained in my fingers, the odor of her skin, in my brain, the taste of her kisses, on my lips, the sound of her voice lingered in my ears, the touch of her clasp still clung to me, and the burning charm of her tenderness still gratified my senses long after the delight but disillusion of my awakening.

"And three times that night I had the same dream.

"When the day dawned she haunted me, possessed me, filled my senses to such an extent that I was not one second without thinking of her.

"At last, not knowing what to do, I dressed myself and went to call on her. As I went upstairs to

her apartment, I was so overcome by emotion that I trembled, and my heart beat rapidly.

"I entered the apartment. She rose the moment she heard my name mentioned; and suddenly our eyes met in a peculiar fixed gaze.

"I sat down. I stammered out some commonplaces which she seemed not to hear. I did not know what to say or do. Then, abruptly, clasping my arms round her, my dream was realized so suddenly that I began to doubt whether I was really awake. We were friends after this for two years."

"What conclusion do you draw from it?" said a voice.

The story-teller seemed to hesitate.

"The conclusion I draw from it—well, by Jove, the conclusion is that it was just a coincidence! And then—who can tell? Perhaps it was some glance of hers which I had not noticed and which came back that night to me through one of those mysterious and unconscious recollections that often bring before us things ignored by our own consciousness, unperceived by our minds!"

"Call it whatever you like," said one of his table companions, when the story was finished; "but if you don't believe in magnetism after that, my dear boy, you are an ungrateful fellow!"

A FATHER'S CONFESSION

ALL Véziers-le-Réthel had followed the funeral procession of M. Badon-Leremince to the grave, and the last words of the funeral oration pronounced by the delegate of the district remained in the minds of all: "He was an honest man, at least!"

An honest man he had been in all the known acts of his life, in his words, in his examples, his attitude, his behavior, his enterprises, in the cut of his beard and the shape of his hats. He never had said a word that did not set an example, never had given an alms without adding a word of advice, never had extended his hand without appearing to bestow a benediction.

He left two children, a boy and a girl. His son was counselor general, and his daughter, having married a lawyer, M. Poirel de la Voulte, moved in the best society of Véziers.

They were inconsolable at the death of their father, for they loved him sincerely.

As soon as the ceremony was over, the son, daughter and son-in-law returned to the house of mourning, and, shutting themselves in the library, they opened the will, the seals of which were to be broken by them alone and only after the coffin had been placed in the ground. This wish was expressed by a notice on the envelope.

A FATHER'S CONFESSION

M. Poirel de la Voulte tore open the envelope, in his character of a lawyer used to such operations, and having adjusted his spectacles, he read in a monotonous voice, made for reading the details of contracts:

My children, my dear children, I could not sleep the eternal sleep in peace if I did not make to you from the tomb a confession, the confession of a crime, remorse for which has ruined my life. Yes, I committed a crime, a frightful, abominable crime.

I was twenty-six years old, and I had just been called to the bar in Paris, and was living the life of young men from the provinces who are stranded in this town without acquaintances, relatives, or friends.

I took a sweetheart. There are beings who cannot live alone. I was one of those. Solitude fills me with horrible anguish, the solitude of my room beside my fire in the evening. I feel then as if I were alone on earth, alone, but surrounded by vague dangers, unknown and terrible things; and the partition that separates me from my neighbor, my neighbor whom I do not know, keeps me at as great a distance from him as the stars that I see through my window. A sort of fever pervades me, a fever of impatience and of fear, and the silence of the walls terrifies me. The silence of a room where one lives alone is so intense and so melancholy! It is not only a silence of the mind; when a piece of furniture cracks a shudder goes through you, for you expect no noise in this melancholy abode.

How many times, nervous and timid from this motionless silence, I have begun to talk, to repeat words without rhyme or reason, only to make some sound. My voice at those times sounds so strange that I am afraid of that, too. Is there anything more dreadful than talking to one's self in an empty house? One's voice sounds like that of another, an unknown voice talking aimlessly, to no one, into the empty air, with no ear to listen to it, for one knows before they escape into the solitude of the room exactly what words will be uttered. And when they resound lugubriously in the silence, they seem no more than an echo, the peculiar echo of words whispered by one's thought.

My sweetheart was a young girl like other young girls who live in Paris on wages that are insufficient to keep them. She was gentle, good, simple. Her parents lived at Poissy. She went to spend several days with them from time to time.

For a year I lived quietly with her, fully decided to leave her when I should find some one whom I liked well enough to marry. I would make a little provision for this one, for it is an understood thing in our social set that a woman's love should be paid for, in money if she is poor, in presents if she is rich.

But one day she told me she was enceinte. I was thunderstruck, and saw in a second that my life would be ruined. I

saw the fetter that I should wear until my death, everywhere, in my future family life, in my old age, forever; the fetter of a woman bound to my life through a child; the fetter of the child whom I must bring up, watch over, protect, while keeping myself unknown to him, and keeping him hidden from the world. I was greatly disturbed at this news, and a confused longing, a criminal desire, surged through my mind; I did not formulate it, but I felt it in my heart, ready to come to the surface, as if some one hidden behind a portière should await the signal to come out. If some accident might only happen! So many of these little beings die before they are born!

Oh, I did not wish my sweetheart to die! The poor girl, I loved her very much! But I wished, possibly, that the child might die before I saw it.

He was born. I set up housekeeping in my little bachelor apartment, an imitation home, with a horrible child. He looked like all children; I did not care for him. Fathers, you see, do not show affection until later. They have not the instinctive and passionate tenderness of mothers; their affection has to be awakened gradually, their mind must become attached by bonds formed each day between beings that live in each other's society.

A year passed. I now avoided my home, which was too small, where soiled linen, baby-clothes and stockings the size of gloves were lying round, where a thousand articles of all descriptions lay on the furniture, on the arm of an easy-chair, everywhere. I went out chiefly that I might not hear the child cry, for he cried on the slightest pretext, when he was bathed, when he was touched, when he was put to bed, when he was taken up in the morning, incessantly.

I had made a few acquaintances, and I met at a reception the woman who was to be your mother. I fell in love with her and became desirous to marry her. I courted her; I asked her parents' consent to our marriage, and it was granted.

I found myself in this dilemma: I must either marry this young girl whom I adored, having a child already, or else tell the truth and renounce her, and happiness, my future, everything; for her parents, who were people of rigid principles, would not give her to me if they knew.

I passed a month of horrible anguish, of mortal torture, a month haunted by a thousand frightful thoughts; and I felt developing in me a hatred toward my son, toward that little morsel of living, screaming flesh, who blocked my path, interrupted my life, condemned me to an existence without hope, without all those vague expectations that make the charm of youth.

But just then my companion's mother became ill, and I was left alone with the child.

It was in December, and the weather was terribly cold. What a night! My companion had just left. I had dined alone in my little dining-room and I went gently into the room where the little one was asleep.

I sat down in an armchair before the fire. The wind was blowing, making the windows rattle, a dry, frosty wind; and I saw through the window the stars shining with that piercing brightness that they have on frosty nights.

Then the idea that had obsessed me for a month rose again

to the surface. As soon as I was quiet it came to me and harassed me. It ate into my mind like a fixed idea, just as cancers must eat into the flesh. It was there, in my head, in my heart, in my whole body, it seemed to me; and it swallowed me up as a wild beast might have. I endeavored to drive it away, to repulse it, to open my mind to other thoughts, as one opens a window to the fresh morning breeze to drive out the vitiated air; but I could not drive it from my brain, not even for a second. I do not know how to express this torture. It gnawed at my soul, and I felt a frightful pain, a real physical and moral pain.

My life was ruined! How could I escape from this situation? How could I draw back, and how could I confess?

And I loved the one who was to become your mother with a mad passion, which this insurmountable obstacle only aggravated.

A terrible rage was taking possession of me, choking me, a rage that verged on madness! Surely I was crazy that evening!

The child was sleeping. I got up and looked at it as it slept. It was he, this abortion, this spawn, this nothing, that condemned me to irremediable unhappiness!

He was asleep, his mouth open, wrapped in his bed-clothes in a crib beside my bed, where I could not sleep.

How did I ever do what I did? How do I know? What force urged me on? What malevolent power took possession of me? Oh! the temptation to crime came to me without any forewarning. All I recall is that my heart beat tumultuously. It beat so hard that I could hear it, as one hears the strokes of a hammer behind a partition. That is all I can recall—the beating of my heart! In my head there was a strange confusion, a tumult, a senseless disorder, a lack of presence of mind. It was one of those hours of bewilderment and hallucination when a man is neither conscious of his actions nor able to guide his will.

I gently raised the coverings from the body of the child; I turned them down to the foot of the crib, and he lay there uncovered and naked.

He did not wake. Then I went toward the window, softly, quite softly, and I opened it.

A breath of icy air glided in like an assassin; it was so cold that I drew aside, and the two candles flickered. I remained standing near the window, not daring to turn round, as if for fear of seeing what was going on behind me, and feeling the icy air continually across my forehead, my cheeks, my hands, the deadly air which kept streaming in. I stood there a long time.

I was not thinking, I was not reflecting. All at once a little cough caused me to shudder frightfully from head to foot, a shudder that I feel still to the roots of my hair. And with a frantic movement I abruptly closed both sides of the window and, turning round, ran over to the crib.

He was still asleep, his mouth open, quite naked. I touched his legs; they were icy cold, and I covered them up.

My heart was suddenly touched, grieved, filled with pity, tenderness, love for this poor innocent being that I had wished

to kill. I kissed his fine, soft hair long and tenderly; then I went and sat down before the fire.

I reflected with amazement, with horror on what I had done, asking myself whence come those tempests of the soul in which a man loses all perspective of things, all command over himself, and acts as in a condition of mad intoxication, not knowing whither he is going—like a vessel in a hurricane.

The child coughed again, and it gave my heart a wrench. Suppose it should die! O God! O God! What would become of me?

I rose from my chair to go and look at him, and with a candle in my hand I leaned over him. Seeing him breathing quietly I felt reassured, when he coughed a third time. It gave me such a shock that I started backward, just as one does at sight of something horrible, and let my candle fall.

As I stood erect after picking it up, I noticed that my temples were bathed in perspiration, that cold sweat which is the result of anguish of soul. And I remained until daylight bending over my son, becoming calm when he remained quiet for some time, and filled with atrocious pain when a weak cough came from his mouth.

He awoke with his eyes red, his throat choked, and with an air of suffering.

When the woman came in to arrange my room I sent her at once for a doctor. He came at the end of an hour, and said, after examining the child:

"Did he not catch cold?"

I began to tremble like a person with palsy, and I faltered:

"No, I do not think so."

And then I said:

"What is the matter? Is it serious?"

"I do not know yet," he replied. "I will come again this evening."

He came that evening. My son had remained almost all day in a condition of drowsiness, coughing from time to time. During the night inflammation of the lungs set in.

That lasted ten days. I cannot express what I suffered in those interminable hours that divide morning from night, night from morning.

He died.

And since—since that moment, I have not passed one hour, not a single hour, without the frightful burning recollection, a gnawing recollection, a memory that seems to wring my heart, awaking in me like a savage beast imprisoned in the depths of my soul.

Oh! if I could have gone mad!

M. Poirel de la Voulte raised his spectacles with a motion that was peculiar to him whenever he finished reading a contract; and the three heirs of the defunct looked at one another without speaking, pale and motionless.

At the end of a minute the lawyer resumed:

"That must be destroyed."

The other two bent their heads in sign of assent. He lighted a candle, carefully separated the pages containing the damaging confession from those relating to the disposition of money, then he held them over the candle and threw them into the fireplace.

And they watched the white sheets as they burned, till they were presently reduced to little crumbling black heaps. And as some words were still visible in white tracing, the daughter, with little strokes of the toe of her shoe, crushed the burning paper, mixing it with the old ashes in the fireplace.

Then all three stood there watching it for some time, as if they feared that the destroyed secret might escape from the fireplace.

A MOTHER OF MONSTERS

I RECALLED this horrible story, the events of which occurred long ago, and this horrible woman, the other day at a fashionable seaside resort, where I saw on the beach a well-known young, elegant and charming Parisienne, adored and respected by everyone.

I had been invited by a friend to pay him a visit in a little provincial town. He took me about in all directions to do the honors of the place, showed me noted scenes, châteaux, industries, ruins. He pointed out monuments, churches, old carved doorways, enormous or distorted trees, the oak of St. Andrew, and the yew tree of Roqueboise.

When I had exhausted my admiration and enthusiasm over all the sights, my friend said with a distressed expression on his face, that there was nothing left to look at. I breathed freely. I would now be able to rest under the shade of the trees. But, all at once, he uttered an exclamation:

"Oh, yes! We have the 'Mother of Monsters'; I must take you to see her."

"Who is that, the 'Mother of Monsters'?" I asked.

"She is an abominable woman," he replied, "a regular demon, a being who voluntarily brings into the world deformed, hideous, frightful children, monstrosities, in fact, and then sells them to showmen who exhibit such things.

"These exploiters of freaks come from time to time to find out if she has any fresh monstrosity, and if it meets with their approval they carry it away with them, paying the mother a compensation.

"She has eleven of this description. She is rich.

"You think I am joking, romancing, exaggerating. No, my friend; I am telling you the truth, the exact truth.

"Let us go and see this woman. Then I will tell you her history."

He took me into one of the suburbs. The woman lived in a pretty little house by the side of the road. It was attractive and well kept. The garden was filled with fragrant flowers. One might have supposed it to be the residence of a retired lawyer.

A maid ushered us into a sort of little country parlor, and the wretch appeared. She was about forty. She was a tall, big woman with hard features, but well formed, vigorous and healthy, the true type of a robust peasant woman, half animal, and half woman.

She was aware of her reputation and received everyone with a humility that smacked of hatred.

"What do the gentlemen wish?" she asked.

"They tell me that your last child is just like an ordinary child, that he does not resemble his brothers at all," replied my friend. "I wanted to be sure of that. Is it true?"

She cast on us a malicious and furious look as she said:

"Oh, no, oh, no, my poor sir! He is perhaps even uglier than the rest. I have no luck, no luck!

They are all like that, it is heartbreaking! How can the good God be so hard on a poor woman who is all alone in the world, how can He?"

She spoke hurriedly, her eyes cast down, with a deprecating air as of a wild beast who is afraid. Her harsh voice became soft, and it seemed strange to hear those tearful falsetto tones issuing from that big, bony frame, of unusual strength and with coarse outlines, which seemed fitted for violent action, and made to utter howls like a wolf.

"We should like to see your little one," said my friend.

I fancied she colored up. I may have been deceived. After a few moments of silence, she said in a louder tone:

"What good will that do you?"

"Why do you not wish to show it to us?" replied my friend. "There are many people to whom you will show it; you know whom I mean."

She gave a start, and resuming her natural voice, and giving free play to her anger, she screamed:

"Was that why you came here? To insult me? Because my children are like animals, tell me? You shall not see him, no, no, you shall not see him! Go away, go away! I do not know why you all try to torment me like that."

She walked over toward us, her hands on her hips. At the brutal tone of her voice, a sort of moaning, or rather a mewing, the lamentable cry of an idiot came from the adjoining room. I shivered to the marrow of my bones. We retreated before her.

"Take care, Devil" (they called her the Devil), said my friend, "take care; some day you will get yourself into trouble through this."

She began to tremble, beside herself with fury, shaking her fist and roaring:

"Be off with you! What will get me into trouble? Be off with you, miscreants!"

She was about to attack us, but we fled, saddened at what we had seen. When we got outside, my friend said:

"Well, you have seen her, what do you think of her?"

"Tell me the story of this brute," I replied.

And this is what he told me as we walked along the white high road, with ripe crops on either side of it which rippled like the sea in the light breeze that passed over them.

"This woman was one a servant on a farm. She was an honest girl, steady and economical. She was never known to have an admirer, and never suspected of any frailty. But she went astray, as so many do.

"She soon found herself in trouble, and was tortured with fear and shame. Wishing to conceal her misfortune, she bound her body tightly with a corset of her own invention, made of boards and cord. The more she developed, the more she bound herself with this instrument of torture, suffering martyrdom, but brave in her sorrow, not allowing anyone to see, or suspect, anything. She maimed the little unborn being, cramping it with that frightful corset, and made a monster of it. Its head was squeezed and elongated to a point, and its large eyes seemed popping out of its head. Its limbs, exaggeratedly long, and twisted like the stalk of a

vine, terminated in fingers like the claws of a spider. Its trunk was tiny, and round as a nut.

"The child was born in an open field, and when the weeders saw it, they fled away, screaming, and the report spread that she had given birth to a demon. From that time on, she was called 'the Devil.'

"She was driven from the farm, and lived on charity, under a cloud. She brought up the monster, whom she hated with a savage hatred, and would have strangled, perhaps, if the priest had not threatened her with arrest.

"One day some travelling showmen heard about the frightful creature, and asked to see it, so that if it pleased them they might take it away. They were pleased, and counted out five hundred francs to the mother. At first, she had refused to let them see the little animal, as she was ashamed; but when she discovered it had a money value, and that these people were anxious to get it, she began to haggle with them, raising her price with all a peasant's persistence.

"She made them draw up a paper, in which they promised to pay her four hundred francs a year besides, as though they had taken this deformity into their employ.

"Incited by the greed of gain, she continued to produce these phenomena, so as to have an assured income like a bourgeoise.

"Some of them were long, some short, some like crabs—all bodies—others like lizards. Several died, and she was heartbroken.

"The law tried to interfere, but as they had no proof they let her continue to produce her freaks.

She has at this moment eleven alive, and they bring in, on an average, counting good and bad years, from five to six thousand francs a year. One, alone, is not placed, the one she was unwilling to show us. But she will not keep it long, for she is known to all the showmen in the world, who come from time to time to see if she has anything new.

"She even gets bids from them when the monster is valuable."

My friend was silent. A profound disgust stirred my heart, and a feeling of rage, of regret, to think that I had not strangled this brute when I had the opportunity.

I had forgotten this story, when I saw on the beach of a fashionable resort the other day, an elegant, charming, dainty woman, surrounded by men who paid her respect as well as admiration.

I was walking along the beach, arm in arm with a friend, the resident physician. Ten minutes later, I saw a nursemaid with three children, who were rolling in the sand. A pair of little crutches lay on the ground, and touched my sympathy. I then noticed that these three children were all deformed, humpbacked, or crooked; and hideous.

"Those are the offspring of that charming woman you saw just now," said the doctor.

I was filled with pity for her, as well as for them, and exclaimed:

"Oh, the poor mother! How can she ever laugh!"

"Do not pity her, my friend. Pity the poor children," replied the doctor. "This is the consequence of preserving a slender figure up to the

last. These little deformities were made by the corset. She knows very well that she is risking her life at this game. But what does she care, as long as she can be beautiful and have admirers!"

And then I recalled that other woman, the peasant, the "Devil," who sold her children, her monsters.

AN UNCOMFORTABLE BED

ONE autumn I went to spend the hunting season with some friends in a château in Picardy.

My friends were fond of practical jokes. I do not care to know people who are not.

When I arrived, they gave me a princely reception, which at once awakened suspicion in my mind. They fired off rifles, embraced me, made much of me, as if they expected to have great fun at my expense.

I said to myself:

"Look out, old ferret! They have something in store for you."

During the dinner the mirth was excessive, exaggerated, in fact. I thought: "Here are people who have more than their share of amusement, and apparently without reason. They must have planned some good joke. Assuredly I am to be the victim of the joke. Attention!"

During the entire evening every one laughed in an exaggerated fashion. I scented a practical joke in the air, as a dog scents game. But what was it? I was watchful, restless. I did not let a word, or a meaning, or a gesture escape me. Every one seemed to me an object of suspicion, and I even looked distrustfully at the faces of the servants.

The hour struck for retiring, and the whole household came to escort me to my room. Why?

They called to me: "Good-night." I entered the apartment, shut the door, and remained standing, without moving a single step, holding the wax candle in my hand.

I heard laughter and whispering in the corridor. Without doubt they were spying on me. I cast a glance round the walls, the furniture, the ceiling, the hangings, the floor. I saw nothing to justify suspicion. I heard persons moving about outside my door. I had no doubt they were looking through the keyhole.

An idea came into my head: "My candle may suddenly go out and leave me in darkness."

Then I went across to the mantelpiece and lighted all the wax candles that were on it. After that I cast another glance around me without discovering anything. I advanced with short steps, carefully examining the apartment. Nothing. I inspected every article, one after the other. Still nothing. I went over to the window. The shutters, large wooden shutters, were open. I shut them with great care, and then drew the curtains, enormous velvet curtains, and placed a chair in front of them, so as to have nothing to fear from outside.

Then I cautiously sat down. The armchair was solid. I did not venture to get into the bed. However, the night was advancing; and I ended by coming to the conclusion that I was foolish. If they were spying on me, as I supposed, they must, while waiting for the success of the joke they had been preparing for me, have been laughing immoderately at my terror. So I made up my mind to go to bed. But the bed was particularly suspicious-looking. I pulled at the curtains. They seemed to be secure.

All the same, there was danger. I was going perhaps to receive a cold shower both from overhead, or perhaps, the moment I stretched myself out, to find myself sinking to the floor with my mattress. I searched in my memory for all the practical jokes of which I ever had experience. And I did not want to be caught. Ah! certainly not! certainly not! Then I suddenly bethought myself of a precaution which I considered insured safety. I caught hold of the side of the mattress gingerly, and very slowly drew it toward me. It came away, followed by the sheet and the rest of the bedclothes. I dragged all these objects into the very middle of the room, facing the entrance door. I made my bed over again as best I could at some distance from the suspected bedstead and the corner which had filled me with such anxiety. Then I extinguished all the candles, and, groping my way, I slipped under the bedclothes.

For at least another hour I remained awake, starting at the slightest sound. Everything seemed quiet in the château. I fell asleep.

I must have been in a deep sleep for a long time, but all of a sudden I was awakened with a start by the fall of a heavy body tumbling right on top of my own, and, at the same time, I received on my face, on my neck, and on my chest a burning liquid which made me utter a howl of pain. And a dreadful noise, as if a sideboard laden with plates and dishes had fallen down, almost deafened me.

I was smothering beneath the weight that was crushing me and preventing me from moving. I stretched out my hand to find out what was the nature of this object. I felt a face, a nose, and whis-

kers. Then, with all my strength, I launched out a blow at this face. But I immediately received a hail of cuffings which made me jump straight out of the soaked sheets, and rush in my nightshirt into the corridor, the door of which I found open.

Oh, heavens! it was broad daylight. The noise brought my friends hurrying into my apartment, and we found, sprawling over my improvised bed, the dismayed valet, who, while bringing me my morning cup of tea, had tripped over this obstacle in the middle of the floor and fallen on his stomach, spilling my breakfast over my face in spite of himself.

The precautions I had taken in closing the shutters and going to sleep in the middle of the room had only brought about the practical joke I had been trying to avoid.

Oh, how they all laughed that day!

A PORTRAIT

"HELLO! there's Milial!" said somebody near me. I looked at the man who had been pointed out, as I had been wishing for a long time to meet this Don Juan.

He was no longer young. His gray hair looked a little like those fur bonnets worn by certain Northern peoples, and his long beard, which fell down over his chest, had also somewhat the appearance of fur. He was talking to a lady, leaning toward her, speaking in a low voice and looking at her with an expression full of respect and tenderness.

I knew his life, or at least as much as was known of it. He had loved madly several times, and there had been certain tragedies with which his name had been connected. When I spoke to women who were the loudest in his praise, and asked them whence came this power, they always answered, after thinking for a while: "I don't know—he has a certain charm about him."

He was certainly not handsome. He had none of the elegance that we ascribe to conquerors of feminine hearts. I wondered what might be his hidden charm. Was it mental? I never had heard of a clever saying of his. In his glance? Perhaps. Or in his voice? The voices of some beings have a certain irresistible attraction, almost suggesting the flavor of things good to eat. One is hungry for

them, and the sound of their words penetrates us like a dainty morsel. A friend was passing. I asked him: "Do you know Monsieur Milial?"

"Yes."

"Introduce us."

A minute later we were shaking hands and talking in the doorway. What he said was correct, agreeable to hear; it contained no irritable thought. The voice was sweet, soft, caressing, musical; but I had heard others much more attractive, much more moving. One listened to him with pleasure, just as one would look at a pretty little brook. No tension of the mind was necessary in order to follow him, no hidden meaning aroused curiosity, no expectation awoke interest. His conversation was rather restful, but it did not awaken in one either a desire to answer, to contradict or to approve, and it was as easy to answer him as it was to listen to him. The response came to the lips of its own accord, as soon as he had finished talking, and phrases turned toward him as if he had naturally aroused them.

One thought soon struck me. I had known him for a quarter of an hour, and it seemed as if he were already one of my old friends, that I had known all about him for a long time; his face, his gestures, his voice, his ideas. Suddenly, after a few minutes of conversation, he seemed already to be installed in my intimacy. All constraint disappeared between us, and, had he so desired, I might have confided in him as one confides only in old friends.

Certainly there was some mystery about him. Those barriers that are closed between most people and that are lowered with time when sympathy,

similar tastes, equal intellectual culture and constant intercourse remove constraint—those barriers seemed not to exist between him and me, and no doubt this was the case between him and all people, both men and women, whom fate threw in his path.

After half an hour we parted, promising to see each other often, and he gave me his address after inviting me to take luncheon with him in two days.

I forgot what hour he had stated, and I arrived too soon; he was not yet home. A correct and silent domestic showed me into a beautiful, quiet, softly lighted parlor. I felt comfortable there, at home. How often I have noticed the influence of apartments on the character and on the mind! There are some which make one feel foolish; in others, on the contrary, one always feels lively. Some make us sad, although well lighted and decorated in light-colored furniture; others cheer us up, although hung with sombre material. Our eye, like our heart, has its likes and dislikes, of which it does not inform us, and which it secretly imposes on our temperament. The harmony of furniture, walls, the style of an *ensemble*, act immediately on our mental state, just as the air from the woods, the sea or the mountains modifies our physical natures.

I sat down on a cushion-covered divan and felt myself suddenly carried and supported by these little silk bags of feathers, as if the outline of my body had been marked out beforehand on this couch.

Then I looked about. There was nothing striking about the room; everywhere were beautiful and modest things, simple and rare furniture, Oriental curtains which did not seem to come from a depart-

ment store but from the interior of a harem; and exactly opposite me hung the portrait of a woman. It was a portrait of medium size, showing the head and the upper part of the body, and the hands, which were holding a book. She was young, bareheaded; ribbons were woven in her hair; she was smiling sadly. Was it because she was bareheaded, was it merely her natural expression? I never have seen a portrait of a lady which seemed so much in its place as that one in that dwelling. Of all those I knew I have seen nothing like that one. All those that I know are on exhibition, whether the lady be dressed in her gaudiest gown, with an attractive headdress and a look which shows that she is posing first of all before the artist and then before those who will look at her or whether they have taken a comfortable attitude in an ordinary gown. Some are standing majestically in all their beauty, which is not at all natural to them in life. All of them have something, a flower or a jewel, a crease in the dress or a curve of the lip, which one feels to have been placed there for effect by the artist. Whether they wear a hat or merely their hair one can immediately notice that they are not entirely natural. Why? One cannot say without knowing them, but the effect is there. They seem to be calling somewhere, on people whom they wish to please and to whom they wish to appear at their best advantage; and they have studied their attitudes, sometimes modest, sometimes haughty.

What could one say about this one? She was at home and alone. Yes, she was alone, for she was smiling as one smiles when thinking in solitude of

something sad or sweet, and not as one smiles when one is being watched. She seemed so much alone and so much at home that she made the whole large apartment seem absolutely empty. She alone lived in it, filled it, gave it life. Many people might come in and converse, laugh, even sing; she would still be alone with a solitary smile, and she alone would give it life with her pictured gaze.

That look also was unique. It fell directly on me, fixed and caressing, without seeing me. All portraits know that they are being watched, and they answer with their eyes, which see, think, follow us without leaving us, from the very moment we enter the apartment they inhabit. This one did not see me; it saw nothing, although its look was fixed directly on me. I remembered the surprising verse of Baudelaire:

> And your eyes, attractive as those of a portrait.

They did indeed attract me in an irresistible manner; those painted eyes which had lived, or which were perhaps still living, threw over me a strange, powerful spell. Oh, what an infinite and tender charm, like a passing breeze, like a dying sunset of lilac, rose and blue, a little sad like the approaching night, which comes behind the sombre frame and out of those impenetrable eyes! Those eyes, created by a few strokes from a brush, hide behind them the mystery of that which seems to be and which does not exist, which can appear in the eyes of a woman, which can make love blossom within us.

The door opened and M. Milial entered. He excused himself for being late. I excused myself for

being ahead of time. Then I said: "Might I ask you who is this lady?"

He answered: "That is my mother. She died very young."

Then I understood whence came the inexplicable attraction of this man.

THE DRUNKARD

THE north wind was blowing a hurricane, driving through the sky big, black, heavy clouds from which the rain poured down on the earth with terrific violence.

A high sea was raging and dashing its huge, slow, foamy waves along the coast with the rumbling sound of thunder. The waves followed each other close, rolling in as high as mountains, scattering the foam as they broke.

The storm engulfed itself in the little valley of Yport, whistling and moaning, tearing the shingles from the roofs, smashing the shutters, knocking down the chimneys, rushing through the narrow streets in such gusts that one could walk only by holding on to the walls, and children would have been lifted up like leaves and carried over the houses into the fields.

The fishing smacks had been hauled high up on land, because at high tide the sea would sweep the beach. Several sailors, sheltered behind the curved bottoms of their boats, were watching this battle of the sky and the sea.

Then, one by one, they went away, for night was falling on the storm, wrapping in shadows the raging ocean and all the battling elements.

Just two men remained, their hands plunged deep into their pockets, bending their backs beneath the

squall, their woolen caps pulled down over their ears; two big Normandy fishermen, bearded, their skin tanned through exposure, with the piercing black eyes of the sailor who looks over the horizon like a bird of prey.

One of them was saying:

"Come on, Jérémie, let's go play dominoes. It's my treat."

The other hesitated a while, tempted on one hand by the game and the thought of brandy, knowing well that, if he went to Paumelle's, he would return home drunk; held back, on the other hand, by the idea of his wife remaining alone in the house.

He asked:

"Any one might think that you had made a bet to get me drunk every night. Say, what good is it doing you, since it's always you that's treating?"

Nevertheless he was smiling at the idea of all this brandy drunk at the expense of another. He was smiling the contented smirk of an avaricious Norman.

Mathurin, his friend, kept pulling him by the sleeve.

"Come on, Jérémie. This isn't the kind of a night to go home without anything to warm you up. What are you afraid of? Isn't your wife going to warm your bed for you?"

Jérémie answered:

"The other night I couldn't find the door—I had to be fished out of the ditch in front of the house!"

He was still laughing at this drunkard's recollection, and he was unconsciously going toward Paumelle's Café, where a light was shining in the win-

dow; he was going, pulled by Mathurin and pushed by the wind, unable to resist these combined forces.

The low room was full of sailors, smoke and noise. All these men, clad in woolens, their elbows on the tables, were shouting to make themselves heard The more people came in, the more one had to shout in order to overcome the noise of voices and the rattling of dominoes on the marble tables.

Jérémie and Mathurin sat down in a corner and began a game, and the glasses were emptied in rapid succession into their thirsty throats.

Then they played more games and drank more glasses. Mathurin kept pouring and winking to the saloon keeper, a big, red-faced man, who chuckled as though at the thought of some fine joke; and Jérémie kept absorbing alcohol and wagging his head, giving vent to a roar of laughter and looking at his comrade with a stupid and contented expression.

All the customers were going away. Every time that one of them would open the door to leave a gust of wind would blow into the café, making the tobacco smoke swhirl around, swinging the lamps at the end of their chains and making their flames flicker, and suddenly one could hear the deep booming of a breaking wave and the moaning of the wind.

Jérémie, his collar unbuttoned, was taking drunkard's poses, one leg outstretched, one arm hanging down and in the other hand holding a domino.

They were alone now with the owner, who had come up to them, interested.

He asked:

"Well, Jérémie, how goes it inside? Feel less thirsty after wetting your throat?"

Jérémie muttered:

"The more I wet it, the drier it gets inside."

The inkeeper cast a sly glance at Mathurin. He said:

"And your brother, Mathurin, where's he now?"

The sailor laughed silently:

"Don't worry; he's warm, all right."

And both of them looked toward Jérémie, who was triumphantly putting down the double six and announcing:

"Game!"

Then the owner declared:

"Well, boys, I'm goin' to bed. I will leave you the lamp and the bottle; there's twenty cents' worth in it. Lock the door when you go, Mathurin, and slip the key under the mat the way you did the other night."

Mathurin answered:

"Don't worry; it'll be all right."

Paumelle shook hands with his two customers and slowly went up the wooden stairs. For several minutes his heavy step echoed through the little house. Then a loud creaking announced that he had got into bed.

The two men continued to play. From time to time a more violent gust of wind would shake the whole house, and the two drinkers would look up, as though some one were about to enter. Then Mathurin would take the bottle and fill Jérémie's glass. But suddenly the clock over the bar struck twelve. Its hoarse clang sounded like the rattling of saucepans. Then Mathurin got up like a sailor whose watch is over.

"Come on, Jérémie, we've got to get out."

The other man rose to his feet with difficulty, got his balance by leaning on the table, reached the door and opened it while his companion was putting out the light.

As soon as they were in the street Mathurin locked the door and then said:

"Well, so long. See you to-morrow night!"

And he disappeared in the darkness.

Jérémie took a few steps, staggered, stretched out his hands, met a wall which supported him and began to stumble along. From time to time a gust of wind would sweep through the street, pushing him forward, making him run for a few steps; then, when the wind would die down, he would stop short, having lost his impetus, and once more he would begin to stagger on his unsteady drunkard's legs.

He went instinctively toward his home, just as birds go to their nests. Finally he recognized his door, and began to feel about for the keyhole and tried to put the key in it. Not finding the hole, he began to swear. Then he began to beat on the door with his fists, calling for his wife to come and help him:

"Mélina! Oh, Mélina!"

As he leaned against the door for support, it gave way and opened, and Jérémie, losing his prop, fell inside, rolling on his face into the middle of his room, and he felt something heavy pass over him and escape in the night.

He was no longer moving, dazed by fright, bewildered, fearing the devil, ghosts, all the mysterious beings of darkness, and he waited a long time without daring to move. But when he found out

that nothing else was moving, a little reason returned to him, the reason of a drunkard.

Gently he sat up. Again he waited a long time, and at last, growing bolder, he called:

"Mélina!"

His wife did not answer.

Then, suddenly, a suspicion crossed his darkened mind, an indistinct, vague suspicion. He was not moving; he was sitting there in the dark, trying to gather together his scattered wits, his mind stumbling over incomplete ideas, just as his feet stumbled along.

Once more he asked:

"Who was it, Mélina? Tell me who it was. I won't hurt you!"

He waited, no voice was raised in the darkness. He was now reasoning with himself out loud.

"I'm drunk, all right! I'm drunk! And he filled me up, the dog; he did it, to stop my goin' home. I'm drunk!"

And he would continue:

"Tell me who it was, Mélina, or somethin'll happen to you."

After having waited again, he went on with the slow and obstinate logic of a drunkard:

"He's been keeping me at that loafer Paumelle's place every night, so as to stop my going home. It's some trick. Oh, you damned carrion!"

Slowly he got on his knees. A blind fury was gaining possession of him, mingling with the fumes of alcohol.

He continued:

"Tell me who it was, Mélina, or you'll get a licking —I warn you!"

He was now standing, trembling with a wild fury, as though the alcohol had set his blood on fire. He took a step, knocked against a chair, seized it, went on, reached the bed, ran his hands over it and felt the warm body of his wife.

Then, maddened, he roared:

"So! You were there, you piece of dirt, and you wouldn't answer!"

And, lifting the chair, which he was holding in his strong sailor's grip, he swung it down before him with an exasperated fury. A cry burst from the bed, an agonizing, piercing cry. Then he began to thrash around like a thresher in a barn. And soon nothing more moved. The chair was broken to pieces, but he still held one leg and beat away with it, panting.

At last he stopped to ask:

"Well, are you ready to tell me who it was?"

Mélina did not answer.

Then, tired out, stupefied from his exertion, he stretched himself out on the ground and slept.

When day came a neighbor, seeing the door open, entered. He saw Jérémie snoring on the floor, amid the broken pieces of a chair, and on the bed a pulp of flesh and blood.

THE WARDROBE

AS we sat chatting after dinner, a party of men, the conversation turned on women, for lack of something else.

One of us said:

"Here's a funny thing that happened to me on that very subject." And he told us the following story:

One evening last winter I suddenly felt overcome by that overpowering sense of misery and languor that takes possession of one from time to time. I was in my own apartment, all alone, and I was convinced that if I gave in to my feelings I should have a terrible attack of melancholia, one of those attacks that lead to suicide when they recur too often.

I put on my overcoat and went out without the slightest idea of what I was going to do. Having gone as far as the boulevards, I began to wander along by the almost empty cafés. It was raining, a fine rain that affects your mind as it does your clothing, not one of those good downpours which come down in torrents, driving breathless passers-by into doorways, but a rain without drops that deposits on your clothing an imperceptible spray and soon covers you with a sort of iced foam that chills you through.

What should I do? I walked in one direction and

then came back, looking for some place where I could spend two hours, and discovering for the first time that there is no place of amusement in Paris in the evening. At last I decided to go to the Folies-Bergère, that entertaining resort for gay women.

There were very few people in the main hall. In the long horseshoe curve there were only a few ordinary looking people, whose plebeian origin was apparent in their manners, their clothes, the cut of their hair and beard, their hats, their complexion. It was rarely that one saw from time to time a man whom you suspected of having washed himself thoroughly, and his whole make-up seemed to match. As for the women, they were always the same, those frightful women you all know, ugly, tired looking, drooping, and walking along in their lackadaisical manner, with that air of foolish superciliousness which they assume, I do not know why.

I thought to myself that, in truth, not one of those languid creatures, greasy rather than fat, puffed out here and thin there, with the contour of a monk and the lower extremities of a bow-legged snipe, was worth the louis that they would get with great difficulty after asking five.

But all at once I saw a little creature whom I thought attractive, not in her first youth, but fresh, comical and tantalizing. I stopped her, and stupidly, without thinking, I made an appointment with her for that night. I did not want to go back to my own home alone, all alone; I preferred the company and the caresses of this hussy.

And I followed her. She lived in a great big house in the Rue des Martyrs. The gas was already extinguished on the stairway. I ascended the steps

slowly, lighting a candle match every few seconds, stubbing my foot against the steps, stumbling and angry as I followed the rustle of the skirt ahead of me.

She stopped on the fourth floor, and having closed the outer door she said:

"Then you will stay till to-morrow?"

"Why, yes. You know that that was the agreement."

"All right, my dear, I just wanted to know. Wait for me here a minute, I will be right back."

And she left me in the darkness. I heard her shutting two doors and then I thought I heard her talking. I was surprised and uneasy. The thought that she had a protector staggered me. But I have good fists and a solid back. "We shall see," I said to myself.

I listened attentively with ear and mind. Some one was stirring about, walking quietly and very carefully. Then another door was opened and I thought I again heard some one talking, but in a very low tone.

She came back carrying a lighted candle.

"You may come in," she said.

She said "thou" in speaking to me, which was an indication of possession. I went in and after passing through a dining room in which it was very evident that no one ever ate, I entered a typical room of all these women, a furnished room with red curtains and a soiled eiderdown bed covering.

"Make yourself at home, *mon chat*," she said.

I gave a suspicious glance at the room, but there seemed no reason for uneasiness.

As she took off her wraps she began to laugh.

"Well, what ails you? Are you changed into a pillar of salt? Come, hurry up."

I did as she suggested.

Five minutes later I longed to put on my things and get away. But this terrible languor that had overcome me at home took possession of me again, and deprived me of energy enough to move and I stayed in spite of the disgust that I felt for this association. The unusual attractiveness that I supposed I had discovered in this creature over there under the chandeliers of the theater had altogether vanished on closer acquaintance, and she was nothing more to me now than a common woman, like all the others, whose indifferent and complaisant kiss smacked of garlic.

I thought I would say something.

"Have you lived here long?" I asked.

"Over six months on the fifteenth of January."

"Where were you before that?"

"In the Rue Clauzel. But the janitor made me very uncomfortable and I left."

And she began to tell me an interminable story of a janitor who had talked scandal about her.

But, suddenly, I heard something moving quite close to us. First there was a sigh, then a slight, but distinct, sound as if some one had turned round on a chair.

I sat up abruptly and asked.

"What was that noise?"

She answered quietly and confidently:

"Do not be uneasy, my dear boy, it is my neighbor. The partition is so thin that one can hear everything as if it were in the room. These are wretched rooms, just like pasteboard."

I felt so lazy that I paid no further attention to it. We resumed our conversation. Driven by the stupid curiosity that prompts all men to question these creatures about their first experiences, to attempt to lift the veil of their first folly, as though to find in them a trace of pristine innocence, to love them, possibly, in a fleeting memory of their candor and modesty of former days, evoked by a word, I insistently asked her about her earlier lovers.

I knew she was telling me lies. What did it matter? Among all these lies I might, perhaps, discover something sincere and pathetic.

"Come," said I, "tell me who he was."

"He was a boating man, my dear."

"Ah! Tell me about it. Where were you?"

"I was at Argenteuil."

"What were you doing?"

"I was waitress in a restaurant."

"What restaurant?"

"'The Freshwater Sailor.' Do you know it?"

"I should say so, kept by Bonanfan."

"Yes, that's it."

"And how did he make love to you, this boating man?"

"While I was doing his room. He took advantage of me."

But I suddenly recalled the theory of a friend of mine, an observant and philosophical physician whom constant attendance in hospitals has brought into daily contact with girl-mothers and prostitutes, with all the shame and all the misery of women, of those poor women who have become the frightful prey of the wandering male with money in his pocket.

"A woman," he said, "is always debauched by a man of her own class and position. I have volumes of statistics on that subject. We accuse the rich of plucking the flower of innocence among the girls of the people. This is not correct. The rich pay for what they want. They may gather some, but never for the first time."

Then, turning to my companion, I began to laugh.

"You know that I am aware of your history. The boating man was not the first."

"Oh, yes, my dear, I swear it."

"You are lying, my dear."

"Oh, no, I assure you."

"You are lying; come, tell me all."

She seemed to hesitate in astonishment. I continued:

"I am a sorcerer, my dear girl, I am a clairvoyant. If you do not tell me the truth, I will go into a trance sleep and then I can find out."

She was afraid, being as stupid as all her kind. She faltered:

"How did you guess?"

"Come, go on telling me," I said.

"Oh, the first time didn't amount to anything. There was a festival in the country. They had sent for a special chef, M. Alexandre. As soon as he came he did just as he pleased in the house. He bossed every one, even the proprietor and his wife, as if he had been a king. He was a big handsome man, who did not seem fitted to stand beside a kitchen range. He was always calling out, 'Come, some butter—some eggs—some Madeira!' And it had to be brought to him at once in a hurry, or

he would get cross and say things that would make us blush all over.

"When the day was over he would smoke a pipe outside the door. And as I was passing by him with a pile of plates he said to me, like that: 'Come, girlie, come down to the water with me and show me the country.' I went with him like a fool, and we had hardly got down to the bank of the river when he took advantage of me so suddenly that I did not even know what he was doing. And then he went away on the nine o'clock train. I never saw him again."

"Is that all?" I asked.

She hesitated.

"Oh, I think Florentin belongs to him."

"Who is Florentin?"

"My little boy."

"Oh! Well, then, you made the boating man believe that he was the father, did you not?"

"You bet!"

"Did he have any money, this boating man?"

"Yes, he left me an income of three hundred francs, settled on Florentin."

I was beginning to be amused and resumed:

"All right, my girl, all right. You are all of you less stupid than one would imagine, all the same. And how old is he now, Florentin?"

She replied:

"He is now twelve. He will make his first communion in the spring."

"That is splendid. And since then you have carried on your business conscientiously?"

She sighed in a resigned manner.

"I must do what I can."

But a loud noise just then coming from the room itself made me start up with a bound. It sounded like some one falling and picking themselves up again by feeling along the wall with their hands.

I had seized the candle and was looking about me, terrified and furious. She had risen also and was trying to hold me back to stop me, murmuring:

"That's nothing, my dear, I assure you it's nothing."

But I had discovered what direction the strange noise came from. I walked straight towards a door hidden at the head of the bed and I opened it abruptly and saw before me, trembling, his bright, terrified eyes opened wide at sight of me, a little pale, thin boy seated beside a large wicker chair off which he had fallen.

As soon as he saw me he began to cry. Stretching out his arms to his mother, he cried:

"It was not my fault, mamma, it was not my fault. I was asleep, and I fell off. Do not scold me, it was not my fault."

I turned to the woman and said:

"What does this mean?"

She seemed confused and worried, and said in a broken voice:

"What do you want me to do? I do not earn enough to put him to school! I have to keep him with me, and I cannot afford to pay for another room, by heavens! He sleeps with me when I am alone. If any one comes for one hour or two he can stay in the wardrobe; he keeps quiet, he understands it. But when people stay all night, as you have done, it tires the poor child to sleep on a chair.

It is not his fault. I should like to see you sleep all night on a chair—you would have something to say."

She was getting angry and excited and was talking loud.

The child was still crying. A poor delicate timid little fellow, a veritable child of the wardrobe, of the cold, dark closet, a child who from time to time was allowed to get a little warmth in the bed if it chanced to be unoccupied.

I also felt inclined to cry.

And I went home to my own bed.

THE MOUNTAIN POOL

Saint Agnes, May 6.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

You asked me to write to you often and to tell you in particular about the things I might see. You also begged me to rummage among my recollections of travels for some of those little anecdotes gathered from a chance peasant, from an innkeeper, from some strange traveling acquaintance, which remain as landmarks in the memory. With a landscape depicted in a few lines, and a little story told in a few sentences you think one can give the true characteristics of a country, make it living, visible, dramatic. I will try to do as you wish. I will, therefore, send you from time to time letters in which I will mention neither you nor myself, but only the landscape and the people who move about in it. And now I will begin.

Spring is a season in which one ought, it seems to me, to drink and eat the landscape. It is the season of chills, just as autumn is the season of reflection. In spring the country rouses the physical senses, in autumn it enters into the soul.

I desired this year to breathe the odor of orange blossoms and I set out for the South of France just at the time that every one else was returning home. I visited Monaco, the shrine of pilgrims, rival of

Mecca and Jerusalem, without leaving any gold in any one else's pockets, and I climbed the high mountain beneath a covering of lemon, orange and olive branches.

Have you ever slept, my friend, in a grove of orange trees in flower? The air that one inhales with delight is a quintessence of perfumes. The strong yet sweet odor, delicious as some dainty, seems to blend with our being, to saturate us, to intoxicate us, to enervate us, to plunge us into a sleepy, dreamy torpor. As though it were an opium prepared by the hands of fairies and not by those of druggists.

This is a country of ravines. The surface of the mountains is cleft, hollowed out in all directions, and in these sinuous crevices grow veritable forests of lemon trees. Here and there where the steep gorge is interrupted by a sort of step, a kind of reservoir has been built which holds the water of the rain storms.

They are large holes with slippery walls with nothing for any one to grasp hold of should they fall in.

I was walking slowly in one of these ascending valleys or gorges, glancing through the foliage at the vivid-hued fruit that remained on the branches. The narrow gorge made the heavy odor of the flowers still more penetrating; the air seemed to be dense with it. A feeling of lassitude came over me and I looked for a place to sit down. A few drops of water glistened in the grass. I thought that there was a spring near by and I climbed a little further to look for it. But I only reached the edge of one of these large, deep reservoirs.

I sat down tailor fashion, with my legs crossed under me, and remained there in a reverie before this hole, which looked as if it were filled with ink, so black and stagnant was the liquid it contained. Down yonder, through the branches, I saw, like patches, bits of the Mediterranean gleaming so that they fairly dazzled my eyes. But my glance always returned to the immense somber well that appeared to be inhabited by no aquatic animals, so motionless was its surface.

Suddenly a voice made me tremble. An old gentleman who was picking flowers—this country is the richest in Europe for herbalists—asked me:

"Are you a relation of those poor children, monsieur?"

I looked at him in astonishment.

"What children, monsieur?"

He seemed embarrassed and answered with a bow:

"I beg your pardon. On seeing you sitting thus absorbed in front of this reservoir I thought you were recalling the frightful tragedy that occurred here."

Now I wanted to know about it, and I begged him to tell me the story.

It is very dismal and very heart-rending, my dear friend, and very trivial at the same time. It is a simple news item. I do not know whether to attribute my emotion to the dramatic manner in which the story was told to me, to the setting of the mountains, to the contrast between the joy of the sunlight and the flowers and this black, murderous hole, but my heart was wrung, all my nerves unstrung by this tale which, perhaps, may not appear

so terribly harrowing to you as you read it in your room without having the scene of the tragedy before your eyes.

It was one spring in recent years. Two little boys frequently came to play on the edge of this cistern while their tutor lay under a tree reading a book. One warm afternoon a piercing cry awoke the tutor who was dozing and the sound of splashing caused by something falling into the water made him jump to his feet abruptly. The younger of the children, eight years of age, was shouting, as he stood beside the reservoir, the surface of which was stirred and eddying at the spot where the older boy had fallen in as he ran along the stone coping.

Distracted, without waiting or stopping to think what was best to do, the tutor jumped into the black water and did not rise again, having struck his head at the bottom of the cistern.

At the same moment the young boy who had risen to the surface was waving his stretched-out arms toward his brother. The little fellow on land lay down full length, while the other tried to swim, to approach the wall, and presently the four little hands clasped each other, tightened in each other's grasp, contracted as though they were fastened together. They both felt the intense joy of an escape from death, a shudder at the danger past.

The older boy tried to climb up to the edge, but could not manage it, as the wall was perpendicular, and his brother, who was too weak, was sliding slowly towards the hole.

Then they remained motionless, filled anew with terror. And they waited.

The little fellow squeezed his brother's hands with all his might and wept from nervousness as he repeated: "I cannot drag you out, I cannot drag you out." And all at once he began to shout, "Help! Help!" But his light voice scarcely penetrated beyond the dome of foliage above their heads.

They remained thus a long time, hours and hours, facing each other, these two children, with one thought, one anguish of heart and the horrible dread that one of them, exhausted, might let go the hands of the other. And they kept on calling, but all in vain.

At length the older boy, who was shivering with cold, said to the little one: "I cannot hold out any longer. I am going to fall. Good-by, little brother." And the other, gasping, replied: "Not yet, not yet, wait." Evening came on, the still evening with its stars mirrored in the water.

The older lad, his endurance giving out, said: "Let go my hand, I am going to give you my watch." He had received it as a present a few days before, and ever since it had been his chief amusement. He was able to get hold of it, and held it out to the little fellow who was sobbing and who laid it down on the grass beside him.

It was night now. The two unhappy beings, exhausted, had almost loosened their grasp. The elder, at last, feeling that he was lost, murmured once more: "Good-by, little brother, kiss mamma and papa." And his numbed fingers relaxed their hold. He sank and did not rise again. . . .

The little fellow, left alone, began to shout wildly: "Paul! Paul!" But the other did not come to the surface.

Then he darted across the mountain, falling among the stones, overcome by the most frightful anguish that can wring a child's heart, and with a face like death reached the sitting-room, where his parents were waiting. He became bewildered again as he led them to the gloomy reservoir. He could not find his way. At last he reached the spot. "It is there; yes, it is there!"

But the cistern had to be emptied, and the proprietor would not permit it as he needed the water for his lemon trees.

The two bodies were found, however, but not until the next day.

You see, my dear friend, that this is a simple news item. But if you had seen the hole itself your heart would have been wrung, as mine was, at the thought of the agony of that child hanging to his brother's hands, of the long suspense of those little chaps who were accustomed only to laugh and to play, and at the simple incident of the giving of the watch.

I said to myself: "May Fate preserve me from ever receiving a similar relic!" I know of nothing more terrible than such a recollection connected with a familiar object that one cannot dispose of. Only think of it; each time that he handles this sacred watch the survivor will picture once more the horrible scene; the pool, the wall, the still water, and the distracted face of his brother—alive, and yet as lost as though he were already dead. And all through his life, at any moment, the vision will be there, awakened the instant even the tip of his finger touches his watch pocket.

And I was sad until evening. I left the spot and kept on climbing, leaving the region of orange trees for the region of olive trees, and the region of olive trees for the region of pines; then I came to a valley of stones, and finally reached the ruins of an ancient castle, built, they say, in the tenth century by a Saracen chief, a good man, who was baptized a Christian through love for a young girl.

Everywhere around me were mountains, and before me the sea, the sea with an almost imperceptible patch on it: Corsica, or, rather, the shadow of Corsica.

But on the mountain summits, blood-red in the glow of the sunset, in the boundless sky and on the sea, in all this superb landscape that I had come here to admire I saw only two poor children, one lying prone on the edge of a hole filled with black water, the other submerged to his neck, their hands intertwined, weeping opposite each other, in despair. And it seemed as though I continually heard a weak, exhausted voice saying: "Good-by, little brother, I am going to give you my watch."

This letter may seem rather melancholy, dear friend. I will try to be more cheerful some other day.

A CREMATION

LAST Monday an Indian prince died at Étretat, Bapu Sahib Khanderao Ghatay, a relation of His Highness, the Maharajah Gaikwar, prince of Baroda, in the province of Guzerat, Presidency of Bombay.

For about three weeks there had been seen walking in the streets about ten young East Indians, small, lithe, with dark skins, dressed all in gray and wearing on their heads caps such as English grooms wear. They were men of high rank who had come to Europe to study the military institutions of the principal Western nations. The little band consisted of three princes, a nobleman, an interpreter and three servants.

The head of the commission had just died, *an old man of forty-two* and father-in-law of Sampatro Kashivao Gaikwar, brother of His Highness, the Gaikwar of Baroda.

The son-in-law accompanied his father-in-law.

The other East Indians were called Ganpatrao Shrâvanrao Gaikwar, cousin of His Highness Khâsherao Gadhav; Vasudev Madhav Samarth, interpreter and secretary; the slaves: Ramchandra Bajaji, Ganu bin Pukâram Kokate, Rhambhaji bin Fabji.

On leaving his native land the one who died recently was overcome with terrible grief, and feeling

convinced that he would never return he wished to give up the journey, but he had to obey the wishes of his noble relative, the Prince of Baroda, and he set out.

They came to spend the latter part of the summer at Étretat, and people would go out of curiosity every morning to see them taking their bath at the Etablissment des Roches-Blanches.

Five or six days ago Bapu Sahib Khanderao Ghatay was taken with pains in his gums; then the inflammation spread to the throat and became ulceration. Gangrene set in and, on Monday, the doctors told his young friends that their relative was dying. The final struggle was already beginning, and the breath had almost left the unfortunate man's body when his friends seized him, snatched him from his bed and laid him on the stone floor of the room, so that, stretched out on the earth, our mother, he should yield up his soul, according to the command of Brahma.

They then sent to ask the mayor, M. Boissaye, for a permit to burn the body that very day so as to fulfill the prescribed ceremonial of the Hindoo religion. The mayor hesitated, telegraphed to the prefecture to demand instructions, at the same time sending word that a failure to reply would be considered by him tantamount to a consent. As he had received no reply at 9 o'clock that evening, he decided, in view of the infectious character of the disease of which the East Indian had died, that the cremation of the body should take place that very night, beneath the cliff, on the beach, at ebb tide.

The mayor is being criticized now for this decision, though he acted as an intelligent, liberal and

determined man, and was upheld and advised by the three physicians who had watched the case and reported the death.

They were dancing at the Casino that evening. It was an early autumn evening, rather chilly. A pretty strong wind was blowing from the ocean, although as yet there was no sea on, and swift, light, ragged clouds were driving across the sky. They came from the edge of the horizon, looking dark against the background of the sky, but as they approached the moon they grew whiter and passed hurriedly across her face, veiling it for a few seconds without completely hiding it.

The tall, straight cliffs that inclose the rounded beach of Étretat and terminate in two celebrated arches, called "the Gates," lay in shadow, and made two great black patches in the softly lighted landscape.

It had rained all day.

The Casino orchestra was playing waltzes, polkas and quadrilles. A rumor was presently circulated among the groups of dancers. It was said that an East Indian prince had just died at the Hôtel des Bains and that the ministry had been approached for permission to burn the body. No one believed it, or at least no one supposed that such a thing could occur so foreign was the custom as yet to our customs, and as the night was far advanced every one went home.

At midnight, the lamplighter, running from street to street, extinguished, one after another, the yellow jets of flame that lighted up the sleeping houses, the mud and the puddles of water. We waited,

watching for the hour when the little town should be quiet and deserted.

Ever since noon a carpenter had been cutting up wood and asking himself with amazement what was going to be done with all these planks sawn up into little bits, and why one should destroy so much good merchandise. This wood was piled up in a cart which went along through side streets as far as the beach, without arousing the suspicion of belated persons who might meet it. It went along on the shingle at the foot of the cliff, and having dumped its contents on the beach the three Indian servants began to build a funeral pile, a little longer than it was wide. They worked alone, for no profane hand must aid in this solemn duty.

It was one o'clock in the morning when the relations of the deceased were informed that they might accomplish their part of the work.

The door of the little house they occupied was open, and we perceived, lying on a stretcher in the small, dimly lighted vestibule the corpse covered with white silk. We could see him plainly as he lay stretched out on his back, his outline clearly defined beneath this white veil.

The East Indians, standing at his feet, remained motionless, while one of them performed the prescribed rites, murmuring unfamiliar words in a low, monotonous tone. He walked round and round the corpse, touching it occasionally, then, taking an urn suspended from three slender chains, he sprinkled it for some time with the sacred water of the Ganges, that East Indians must always carry with them wherever they go.

Then the stretcher was lifted by four of them

who started off at a slow march. The moon had gone down, leaving the muddy, deserted streets in darkness, but the body on the stretcher appeared to be luminous, so dazzlingly white was the silk, and it was a weird sight to see, passing along through the night, the semi-luminous form of this corpse, borne by those men, the dusky skin of whose faces and hands could scarcely be distinguished from their clothing in the darkness.

Behind the corpse came three Indians, and then, a full head taller than themselves and wrapped in an ample traveling coat of a soft gray color, appeared the outline of an Englishman, a kind and superior man, a friend of theirs, who was their guide and counselor in their European travels.

Beneath the cold, misty sky of this little northern beach I felt as if I were taking part in a sort of symbolical drama. It seemed to me that they were carrying there, before me, the conquered genius of India, followed, as in a funeral procession, by the victorious genius of England robed in a gray ulster.

On the shingly beach the four bearers halted a few moments to take breath, and then proceeded on their way. They now walked quickly, bending beneath the weight of their burden. At length they reached the funeral pile. It was erected in an indentation, at the very foot of the cliff, which rose above it perpendicularly a hundred meters high, perfectly white but looking gray in the night.

The funeral pile was about three and a half feet high. The corpse was placed on it and then one of the Indians asked to have the pole star pointed out to him. This was done, and the dead Rajah

was laid with his feet turned towards his native country. Then twelve bottles of kerosene were poured over him and he was covered completely with thin slabs of pine wood. For almost another hour the relations and servants kept piling up the funeral pyre which looked like one of those piles of wood that carpenters keep in their yards. Then on top of this was poured the contents of twenty bottles of oil, and on top of all they emptied a bag of fine shavings. A few steps further on, a flame was glimmering in a little bronze brazier, which had remained lighted since the arrival of the corpse.

The moment had arrived. The relations went to fetch the fire. As it was barely alight, some oil was poured on it, and suddenly a flame arose lighting up the great wall of rock from summit to base. An Indian who was leaning over the brazier rose upright, his two hands in the air, his elbows bent, and all at once we saw arising, all black on the immense white cliff, a colossal shadow, the shadow of Buddha in his hieratic posture. And the little pointed toque that the man wore on his head even looked like the head-dress of the god.

The effect was so striking and unexpected that I felt my heart beat as though some supernatural apparition had risen up before me.

That was just what it was—the ancient and sacred image, come from the heart of the East to the ends of Europe, and watching over its son whom they were going to cremate there.

It vanished. They brought fire. The shavings on top of the pyre were lighted and then the wood caught fire and a brilliant light illumined the cliff,

the shingle and the foam of the waves as they broke on the beach.

It grew brighter from second to second, lighting up on the sea in the distance the dancing crest of the waves.

The breeze from the ocean blew in gusts, increasing the heat of the flame which flattened down, twisted, then shot up again, throwing out millions of sparks. They mounted with wild rapidity along the cliff and were lost in the sky, mingling with the stars, increasing their number. Some sea birds who had awakened uttered their plaintive cry, and, describing long curves, flew, with their white wings extended, through the gleam from the funeral pyre and then disappeared in the night.

Before long the pile of wood was nothing but a mass of flame, not red but yellow, a blinding yellow, a furnace lashed by the wind. And, suddenly, beneath a stronger gust, it tottered, partially crumbling as it leaned towards the sea, and the corpse came to view, full length, blackened on his couch of flame and burning with long blue flames.

The pile of wood having crumbled further on the right the corpse turned over as a man does in bed. They immediately covered him with fresh wood and the fire started up again more furiously than ever.

The East Indians, seated in a semi-circle on the shingle, looked out with sad, serious faces. And the rest of us, as it was very cold, had drawn nearer to the fire until the smoke and sparks came in our faces. There was no odor save that of burning pine and petroleum.

Hours passed; day began to break. Toward five o'clock in the morning nothing remained but a

heap of ashes. The relations gathered them up, cast some of them to the winds, some in the sea, and kept some in a brass vase that they had brought from India. They then retired to their home to give utterance to lamentations.

These young princes and their servants, by the employment of the most inadequate appliances succeeded in carrying out the cremation of their relation in the most perfect manner, with singular skill and remarkable dignity. Everything was done according to ritual, according to the rigid ordinances of their religion. Their dead one rests in peace.

The following morning at daybreak there was an indescribable commotion in Étretat. Some insisted that they had burned a man alive, others that they were trying to hide a crime, some that the mayor would be put in jail, others that the Indian prince had succumbed to an attack of cholera.

The men were amazed, the women indignant. A crowd of people spent the day on the site of the funeral pile, looking for fragments of bone in the shingle that was still warm. They found enough bones to reconstruct ten skeletons, for the farmers on shore frequently throw their dead sheep into the sea. The finders carefully placed these various fragments in their pocketbooks. But not one of them possesses a true particle of the Indian prince.

That very night a deputy sent by the government came to hold an inquest. He, however, formed an estimate of this singular case like a man of intelligence and good sense. But what should he say in his report?

The East Indians declared that if they had been

prevented in France from cremating their dead they would have taken him to a freer country where they could have carried out their customs.

Thus, I have seen a man cremated on a funeral pile, and it has given me a wish to disappear in the same manner.

In this way everything ends at once. Man expedites the slow work of nature, instead of delaying it by the hideous coffin in which one decomposes for months. The flesh is dead, the spirit has fled. Fire which purifies disperses in a few hours all that was a human being; it casts it to the winds, converting it into air and ashes, and not into ignominious corruption.

This is clean and hygienic. Putrefaction beneath the ground in a closed box where the body becomes like pap, a blackened, stinking pap, has about it something repugnant and disgusting. The sight of the coffin as it descends into this muddy hole wrings one's heart with anguish. But the funeral pyre which flames up beneath the sky has about it something grand, beautiful and solemn.

MISTI

I WAS very much interested at that time in a droll little woman. She was married, of course, as I have a horror of unmarried flirts. What enjoyment is there in making love to a woman who belongs to nobody and yet belongs to any one? And, besides, morality aside, I do not understand love as a trade. That disgusts me somewhat.

The especial attraction in a married woman to a bachelor is that she gives him a home, a sweet, pleasant home where every one takes care of you and spoils you, from the husband to the servants. One finds everything combined there, love, friendship, even fatherly interest, bed and board, all, in fact, that constitutes the happiness of life, with this incalculable advantage, that one can change one's family from time to time, take up one's abode in all kinds of society in turn: in summer, in the country with the workman who rents you a room in his house; in winter with the townsfolk, or even with the nobility, if one is ambitious.

I have another weakness; it is that I become attached to the husband as well as the wife. I acknowledge even that some husbands, ordinary or coarse as they may be, give me a feeling of disgust for their wives, however charming they may be. But when the husband is intellectual or charming I invariably become very much attached to him. I am careful if I quarrel with the wife not to quarrel

with the husband. In this way I have made some of my best friends, and have also proved in many cases the incontestable superiority of the male over the female in the human species. The latter makes all sorts of trouble—scenes, reproaches, etc.; while the former, who has just as good a right to complain, treats you, on the contrary, as though you were the special Providence of his hearth.

Well, my friend was a quaint little woman, a brunette, fanciful, capricious, pious, superstitious, credulous as a monk, but charming. She had a way of kissing one that I never saw in any one else —but that was not the attraction—and such a soft skin! It gave me intense delight merely to hold her hands. And an eye—her glance was like a slow caress, delicious and unending. Sometimes I would lean my head on her knee and we would remain motionless, she leaning over me with that subtle, enigmatic, disturbing smile that women have, while my eyes would be raised to hers, drinking sweetly and deliciously into my heart, like a form of intoxication, the glance of her limpid blue eyes, limpid as though they were full of thoughts of love, and blue as though they were a heaven of delights.

Her husband, inspector of some large public works, was frequently away from home and left us our evenings free. Sometimes I spent them with her lounging on the divan with my forehead on one of her knees; while on the other lay an enormous black cat called "Misti," whom she adored. Our fingers would meet on the cat's back and would intertwine in her soft silky fur. I felt its warm body against my cheek, trembling with its eternal purring, and occasionally a paw would reach out

and place on my mouth, or my eyelid, five unsheathed claws which would prick my eyelids, and then be immediately withdrawn.

Sometimes we would go out on what we called our escapades. They were very innocent, however. They consisted in taking supper at some inn in the suburbs, or else, after dining at her house or at mine, in making the round of the cheap cafés, like students out for a lark.

We would go into the common drinking places and take our seats at the end of the smoky den on two rickety chairs, at an old wooden table. A cloud of pungent smoke, with which blended an odor of fried fish from dinner, filled the room. Men in smocks were talking in loud tones as they drank their petits verres, and the astonished waiter placed before us two cherry brandies.

She, trembling, charmingly afraid, would raise her double black veil as far as her nose, and then take up her glass with the enjoyment that one feels at doing something delightfully naughty. Each cherry she swallowed made her feel as if she had done something wrong, each swallow of the burning liquor had on her the affect of a delicate and forbidden enjoyment.

Then she would say to me in a low tone: "Let us go." And we would leave, she walking quickly with lowered head between the drinkers who watched her going by with a look of displeasure. And as soon as we got into the street she would give a great sigh of relief, as if we had escaped some terrible danger.

Sometimes she would ask me with a shudder: "Suppose they should say something rude to me

in those places, what would you do?" "Why, I would defend you, parbleu!" I would reply in a resolute manner. And she would squeeze my arm for happiness, perhaps with a vague wish that she might be insulted and protected, that she might see men fight on her account, even those men, with me!

One evening as we sat at a table in a tavern at Montmartre, we saw an old woman in tattered garments come in, holding in her hand a pack of dirty cards. Perceiving a lady, the old woman at once approached us and offered to tell my friend's fortune. Emma, who in her heart believed in everything, was trembling with longing and anxiety, and she made a place beside her for the old woman.

The latter, old, wrinkled, her eyes with red inflamed rings round them, and her mouth without a single tooth in it, began to deal her dirty cards on the table. She dealt them in piles, then gathered them up, and then dealt them out again, murmuring indistinguishable words. Emma, turning pale, listened with bated breath, gasping with anxiety and curiosity.

The fortune-teller broke silence. She predicted vague happenings: happiness and children, a fair young man, a voyage, money, a lawsuit, a dark man, the return of some one, success, a death. The mention of this death attracted the younger woman's attention. "Whose death? When? In what manner?"

The old woman replied: "Oh, as to that, these cards are not certain enough. You must come to my place to-morrow; I will tell you about it with coffee grounds which never make a mistake."

Emma turned anxiously to me:

"Say, let us go there to-morrow. Oh, please say yes. If not, you cannot imagine how worried I shall be."

I began to laugh.

"We will go if you wish it, dearie."

The old woman gave us her address. She lived on the sixth floor, in a wretched house behind the Buttes-Chaumont. We went there the following day.

Her room, an attic containing two chairs and a bed, was filled with strange objects, bunches of herbs hanging from nails, skins of animals, flasks and phials containing liquids of various colors. On the table a stuffed black cat looked out of eyes of glass. He seemed like the demon of this sinister dwelling.

Emma, almost fainting with emotion, sat down on a chair and exclaimed:

"Oh, dear, look at that cat; how like it is to Misti."

And she explained to the old woman that she had a cat "exactly like that, exactly like that!"

The old woman replied gravely:

"If you are in love with a man, you must not keep it."

Emma, suddenly filled with fear, asked:

"Why not?"

The old woman sat down familiarly beside her and took her hand.

"It was the undoing of my life," she said.

My friend wanted to hear about it. She leaned against the old woman, questioned her, begged her to tell. At length the woman agreed to do so.

"I loved that cat," she said, "as one would love a brother. I was young then and all alone, a seamstress. I had only him, Mouton. One of the tenants had given it to me. He was as intelligent as a child, and gentle as well, and he worshiped me, my dear lady, he worshiped me more than one does a fetish. All day long he would sit on my lap purring, and all night long on my pillow; I could feel his heart beating, in fact.

"Well, I happened to make an acquaintance, a fine young man who was working in a white-goods house. That went on for about three months on a footing of mere friendship. But you know one is liable to weaken, it may happen to any one, and, besides, I had really begun to love him. He was so nice, so nice, and so good. He wanted us to live together, for economy's sake. I finally allowed him to come and see me one evening. I had not made up my mind to anything definite; oh, no! But I was pleased at the idea that we should spend an hour together.

"At first he behaved very well, said nice things to me that made my heart go pit-a-pat. And then he kissed me, madame, kissed me as one does when they love. I remained motionless, my eyes closed, in a paroxysm of happiness. But, suddenly, I felt him start violently and he gave a scream, a scream that I shall never forget. I opened my eyes and saw that Mouton had sprung at his face and was tearing the skin with his claws as if it had been a linen rag. And the blood was streaming down like rain, madame.

"I tried to take the cat away, but he held on tight, scratching all the time; and he bit me, he was

so crazy. I finally got him and threw him out of the window, which was open, for it was summer.

"When I began to bathe my poor friend's face, I noticed that his eyes were destroyed, both his eyes!

"He had to go to the hospital. He died of grief at the end of a year. I wanted to keep him with me and provide for him, but he would not agree to it. One would have supposed that he hated me after the occurrence.

"As for Mouton, his back was broken by the fall. The janitor picked up his body. I had him stuffed, for in spite of all I was fond of him. If he acted as he did it was because he loved me, was it not?"

The old woman was silent and began to stroke the lifeless animal whose body trembled on its iron framework.

Emma, with sorrowful heart, had forgotten about the predicted death—or, at least, she did not allude to it again, and she left, giving the woman five francs.

As her husband was to return the following day, I did not go to the house for several days. When I did go I was surprised at not seeing Misti. I asked where he was.

She blushed and replied:

"I gave him away. I was uneasy."

I was astonished.

"Uneasy? Uneasy? What about?"

She gave me a long kiss and said in a low tone:

"I was uneasy about your eyes, my dear."

Misti appeared in *Gil Blas* of January 22, 1884, over the signature of "MAUPRIGNEUSE."

MADAME HERMET

CRAZY people attract me. They live in a mysterious land of weird dreams, in that impenetrable cloud of dementia where all that they have witnessed in their previous life, all they have loved, is reproduced for them in an imaginary existence, outside of all laws that govern the things of this life and control human thought.

For them there is no such thing as the impossible, nothing is improbable; fairyland is a constant quantity and the supernatural quite familiar. The old rampart, logic; the old wall, reason; the old mainstay of thought, good sense, break down, fall and crumble before their imagination, set free and escaped into the limitless realm of fancy, and advancing with fabulous bounds, and nothing can check it. For them everything happens, and anything may happen. They make no effort to conquer events, to overcome resistance, to overturn obstacles. By a sudden caprice of their flighty imagination they become princes, emperors, or gods, are possessed of all the wealth of the world, all the delightful things of life, enjoy all pleasures, are always strong, always beautiful, always young, always beloved! They, alone, can be happy in this world; for, as far as they are concerned, reality does not exist. I love to look into their wandering intelligence as one leans over an abyss at the bottom of which seethes

a foaming torrent whose source and destination are both unknown.

But it is in vain that we lean over these abysses, for we shall never discover the source nor the destination of this water. After all, it is only water, just like what is flowing in the sunlight, and we shall learn nothing by looking at it.

It is likewise of no use to ponder over the intelligence of crazy people, for their most weird notions are, in fact, only ideas that are already known, which appear strange simply because they are no longer under the restraint of reason. Their whimsical source surprises us because we do not see it bubbling up. Doubtless the dropping of a little stone into the current was sufficient to cause these ebullitions. Nevertheless crazy people attract me and I always return to them, drawn in spite of myself by this trivial mystery of dementia.

One day as I was visiting one of the asylums the physician who was my guide said:

"Come, I will show you an interesting case."

And he opened the door of a cell where a woman of about forty, still handsome, was seated in a large armchair, looking persistently at her face in a little hand mirror.

As soon as she saw us she rose to her feet, ran to the other end of the room, picked up a veil that lay on a chair, wrapped it carefully round her face, then came back, nodding her head in reply to our greeting.

"Well," said the doctor, "how are you this morning?"

She gave a deep sigh.

"Oh, ill, monsieur, very ill. The marks are increasing every day."

He replied in a tone of conviction:

"Oh, no; oh, no; I assure you that you are mistaken."

She drew near to him and murmured:

"No. I am certain of it. I counted ten pittings more this morning, three on the right cheek, four on the left cheek, and three on the forehead. It is frightful, frightful! I shall never dare to let any one see me, not even my son; no, not even him! I am lost, I am disfigured forever."

She fell back in her armchair and began to sob.

The doctor took a chair, sat down beside her, and said soothingly in a gentle tone:

"Come, let me see; I assure you it is nothing. With a slight cauterization I will make it all disappear."

She shook her head in denial, without speaking. He tried to touch her veil, but she seized it with both hands so violently that her fingers went through it.

He continued to reason with her and reassure her.

"Come, you know very well that I remove those horrid pits every time and that there is no trace of them after I have treated them. If you do not let me see them I cannot cure you."

"I do not mind your seeing them," she murmured, "but I do not know that gentleman who is with you."

"He is a doctor also, who can give you better care than I can."

She then allowed her face to be uncovered, but her dread, her emotion, her shame at being seen,

brought a rosy flush to her face and her neck, down to the collar of her dress. She cast down her eyes, turned her face aside, first to the right, then to the left, to avoid our gaze and stammered out:

"Oh, it is torture to me to let myself be seen like this! It is horrible, is it not? Is it not horrible?"

I looked at her in much surprise, for there was nothing on her face, not a mark, not a spot, not a sign of one, nor a scar.

She turned towards me, her eyes still lowered, and said:

"It was while taking care of my son that I caught this fearful disease, monsieur. I saved him, but I am disfigured. I sacrificed my beauty to him, to my poor child. However, I did my duty, my conscience is at rest. If I suffer it is known only to God."

The doctor had drawn from his coat pocket a fine water-color paint brush.

"Let me attend to it," he said, "I will put it all right."

She held out her right cheek, and he began by touching it lightly with the brush here and there, as though he were putting little points of paint on it. He did the same with the left cheek, then with the chin, and the forehead, and then exclaimed:

"See, there is nothing there now, nothing at all!"

She took up the mirror, gazed at her reflection with profound, eager attention, with a strong mental effort to discover something, then she sighed:

"No. It hardly shows at all. I am infinitely obliged to you."

The doctor had risen. He bowed to her, ushered

me out and followed me, and, as soon as he had locked the door, said:

"Here is the history of this unhappy woman."

Her name is Mme. Hermet. She was once very beautiful, a great coquette, very much beloved and very much in love with life.

She was one of those women who have nothing but their beauty and their love of admiration to sustain, guide or comfort them in this life. The constant anxiety to retain her freshness, the care of her complexion, of her hands, her teeth, of every portion of body that was visible, occupied all her time and all her attention.

She became a widow, with one son. The boy was brought up as are all children of society beauties. She was, however, very fond of him.

He grew up, and she grew older. Whether she saw the fatal crisis approaching, I cannot say. Did she, like so many others, gaze for hours and hours at her skin, once so fine, so transparent and free from blemish, now beginning to shrivel slightly, to be crossed with a thousand little lines, as yet imperceptible, that will grow deeper day by day, month by month? Did she also see slowly, but surely, increasing traces of those long wrinkles on the forehead, those slender serpents that nothing can check? Did she suffer the torture, the abominable torture of the mirror, the little mirror with the silver handle which one cannot make up one's mind to lay down on the table, but then throws down in disgust only to take it up again in order to look more closely, and still more closely at the hateful and insidious

approaches of old age? Did she shut herself up ten times, twenty times a day, leaving her friends chatting in the drawing-room, and go up to her room, where, under the protection of bolts and bars, she would again contemplate the work of time on her ripe beauty, now beginning to wither, and recognize with despair the gradual progress of the process which no one else had as yet seemed to perceive, but of which she, herself, was well aware. She knows where to seek the most serious, the gravest traces of age. And the mirror, the little round hand-glass in its carved silver frame, tells her horrible things; for it speaks, it seems to laugh, it jeers and tells her all that is going to occur, all the physical discomforts and the atrocious mental anguish she will suffer until the day of her death, which will be the day of her deliverance.

Did she weep, distractedly, on her knees, her forehead to the ground, and pray, pray, pray to Him who thus slays his creatures and gives them youth only that he may render old age more unendurable, and lends them beauty only that he may withdraw it almost immediately? Did she pray to Him, imploring Him to do for her what He has never yet done for any one, to let her retain until her last day her charm, her freshness and her gracefulness? Then, finding that she was imploring in vain an inflexible Unknown who drives on the years, one after another, did she roll on the carpet in her room, knocking her head against the furniture and stifling in her throat shrieks of despair?

Doubtless she suffered these tortures, for this is what occurred:

One day (she was then thirty-five) her son aged fifteen, fell ill.

He took to his bed without any one being able to determine the cause or nature of his illness.

His tutor, a priest, watched beside him and hardly ever left him, while Mme. Hermet came morning and evening to inquire how he was.

She would come into the room in the morning in her night wrapper, smiling, all powdered and perfumed, and would ask as she entered the door:

"Well, George, are you better?"

The big boy, his face red, swollen and showing the ravages of fever, would reply:

"Yes, little mother, a little better."

She would stay in the room a few seconds, look at the bottles of medicine, and purse her lips as if she were saying "phew," and then would suddenly exclaim: "Oh, I forgot something very important," and would run out of the room leaving behind her a fragrance of choice toilet perfumes.

In the evening she would appear in a décolleté dress, in a still greater hurry, for she was always late, and she had just time to inquire:

"Well, what does the doctor say?"

The priest would reply:

"He has not yet given an opinion, madame."

But one evening the abbé replied: "Madame, your son has got the small-pox."

She uttered a scream of terror and fled from the room.

When her maid came to her room the following morning she noticed at once a strong odor of burnt sugar, and she found her mistress, with wide-open

eyes, her face pale from lack of sleep, and shivering with terror in her bed.

As soon as the shutters were opened Mme. Hermet asked:

"How is George?"

"Oh, not at all well to-day, madame."

She did not rise until noon, when she ate two eggs with a cup of tea, as if she herself had been ill, and then she went out to a druggist's to inquire about prophylactic measures against the contagion of small-pox.

She did not come home until dinner time, laden with medicine bottles, and shut herself up at once in her room, where she saturated herself with disinfectants.

The priest was waiting for her in the dining-room. As soon as she saw him she exclaimed in a voice full of emotion:

"Well?"

"No improvement. The doctor is very anxious."

She began to cry and could eat nothing, she was so worried.

The next day, as soon as it was light, she sent to inquire for her son, but there was no improvement and she spent the whole day in her room, where little braziers were giving out pungent odors. Her maid said also that you could hear her sighing all the evening.

She spent a whole week in this manner, only going out for an hour or two during the afternoon to breathe the air.

She now sent to make inquiries every hour, and would sob when the reports were unfavorable.

On the morning of the eleventh day the priest,

having been announced, entered her room, his face grave and pale, and said, without taking the chair she offered him:

"Madame, your son is very ill and wishes to see you."

She fell on her knees, exclaiming:

"Oh, my God! Oh, my God! I would never dare! My God! My God! Help me!"

The priest continued:

"The doctor holds out little hope, madame, and George is expecting you!"

And he left the room.

Two hours later as the young lad, feeling himself dying, again asked for his mother, the abbé went to her again and found her still on her knees, still weeping and repeating:

"I will not. . . . I will not. . . . I am too much afraid. . . . I will not. . . ."

He tried to persuade her, to strengthen her, to lead her. He only succeeded in bringing on an attack of "nerves" that lasted some time and caused her to shriek.

The doctor when he came in the evening was told of this cowardice and declared that he would bring her in himself, of her own volition, or by force. But after trying all manner of argument and just as he seized her round the waist to carry her into her son's room, she caught hold of the door and clung to it so firmly that they could not drag her away. Then when they let go of her she fell at the feet of the doctor, begging his forgiveness and acknowledging that she was a wretched creature. And then she exclaimed: "Oh, he is not going to die; tell me that he is not going to die, I beg of

you; tell him that I love him, that I worship him. . . ."

The young lad was dying. Feeling that he had only a few moments more to live, he entreated that his mother be persuaded to come and bid him a last farewell. With that sort of presentiment that the dying sometimes have, he had understood, had guessed all, and he said: "If she is afraid to come into the room, beg her just to come on the balcony as far as my window so that I may see her, at least, so that I may take a farewell look at her, as I cannot kiss her."

The doctor and the abbé, once more, went together to this woman and assured her: "You will run no risk, for there will be a pane of glass between you and him."

She consented, covered up her head, and took with her a bottle of smelling salts. She took three steps on the balcony; then, all at once, hiding her face in her hands, she moaned: "No . . . no . . . I would never dare to look at him . . . never. . . . I am too much ashamed . . . too much afraid. . . . No . . . I cannot."

They endeavored to drag her along, but she held on with both hands to the railings and uttered such plaints that the passers-by in the street raised their heads. And the dying boy waited, his eyes turned towards that window, waited to die until he could see for the last time the sweet, beloved face, the worshiped face of his mother.

He waited long, and night came on. Then he turned over with his face to the wall and was silent.

When day broke he was dead. The day following she was crazy.

THE MAGIC COUCH

THE Seine flowed past my house, without a ripple on its surface, and gleaming in the bright morning sunlight. It was a beautiful, broad, indolent silver stream, with crimson lights here and there; and on the opposite side of the river were rows of tall trees that covered all the bank with an immense wall of verdure.

The sensation of life which is renewed each day, of fresh, happy, loving life trembled in the leaves, palpitated in the air, was mirrored in the water.

The postman had just brought my papers, which were handed to me, and I walked slowly to the river bank in order to read them.

In the first paper I opened I noticed this headline, "Statistics of Suicides," and I read that more than 8,500 persons had killed themselves in that year.

In a moment I seemed to see them! I saw this voluntary and hideous massacre of the despairing who were weary of life. I saw men bleeding, their jaws fractured, their skulls cloven, their breasts pierced by a bullet, slowly dying, alone in a little room in a hotel, giving no thought to their wound, but thinking only of their misfortunes.

I saw others seated before a tumbler in which some matches were soaking, or before a little bottle with a red label.

They would look at it fixedly without moving;

then they would drink and await the result; then a spasm would convulse their cheeks and draw their lips together; their eyes would grow wild with terror, for they did not know that the end would be preceded by so much suffering.

They rose to their feet, paused, fell over and with their hands pressed to their stomachs they felt their internal organs on fire, their entrails devoured by the fiery liquid, before their minds began to grow dim.

I saw others hanging from a nail in the wall, from the fastening of the window, from a hook in the ceiling, from a beam in the garret, from a branch of a tree amid the evening rain. And I surmised all that had happened before they hung there motionless, their tongues hanging out of their mouths. I imagined the anguish of their heart, their final hesitation, their attempts to fasten the rope, to determine that it was secure, then to pass the noose round their neck and to let themselves fall.

I saw others lying on wretched beds, mothers with their little children, old men dying of hunger, young girls dying for love, all rigid, suffocated, asphyxiated, while in the center of the room the brasier still gave forth the fumes of charcoal.

And I saw others walking at night along the deserted bridges. These were the most sinister. The water flowed under the arches with a low sound. They did not see it . . . they guessed at it from its cool breath! They longed for it and they feared it. They dared not do it! And yet, they must. A distant clock sounded the hour and, suddenly, in the vast silence of the night, there was heard the splash of a body falling into the river, a scream or two,

the sound of hands beating the water, and all was still. Sometimes, even, there was only the sound of the falling body when they had tied their arms down or fastened a stone to their feet.

Oh, the poor things, the poor things, the poor things, how I felt their anguish, how I died in their death! I went through all their wretchedness; I endured in one hour all their tortures. I knew all the sorrows that had led them to this, for I know the deceitful infamy of life, and no one has felt it more than I have.

How I understood them, these who weak, harassed by misfortune, having lost those they loved, awakened from the dream of a tardy compensation, from the illusion of another existence where God will finally be just, after having been ferocious, and their minds disabused of the mirages of happiness, have given up the fight and desire to put an end to this ceaseless tragedy, or this shameful comedy.

Suicide! Why, it is the strength of those whose strength is exhausted, the hope of those who no longer believe, the sublime courage of the conquered! Yes, there is at least one door to this life we can always open and pass through to the other side. Nature had an impulse of pity; she did not shut us up in prison. Mercy for the despairing!

As for those who are simply disillusioned, let them march ahead with free soul and quiet heart. They have nothing to fear since they may take their leave; for behind them there is always this door that the gods of our illusions cannot even lock.

I thought of this crowd of suicides: more than eight thousand five hundred in one year. And it seemed to me that they had combined to send to the

world a prayer, to utter a cry of appeal, to demand something that should come into effect later when we understood things better. It seemed to me that all these victims, their throats cut, poisoned, hung, asphyxiated, or drowned, all came together, a frightful horde, like citizens to the polls, to say to society: "Grant us, at least, a gentle death! Help us to die, you who will not help us to live! See, we are numerous, we have the right to speak in these days of freedom, of philosophic independence and of popular suffrage. Give to those who renounce life the charity of a death that will not be repugnant nor terrible."

I began to dream, allowing my fancy to roam at will in weird and mysterious fashion on this subject.

I seemed to be all at once in a beautiful city. It was Paris; but at what period? I walked about the streets, looking at the houses, the theaters, the public buildings, and presently found myself in a square where I remarked a large building, very handsome, dainty and attractive.

I was surprised on reading on the façade this inscription in letters of gold, "Suicide Bureau."

Oh, the weirdness of waking dreams where the spirit soars into a world of unrealities and possibilities! Nothing astonishes one, nothing shocks one; and the unbridled fancy makes no distinction between the comic and the tragic.

I approached the building where footmen in knee-breeches were seated in the vestibule in front of a cloak-room as they do at the entrance of a club.

I entered out of curiosity. One of the men rose and said:

"What does monsieur wish?"

"I wish to know what building this is."

"Nothing more?"

"Why, no."

"Then would monsieur like me to take him to the Secretary of the Bureau?"

I hesitated, and asked:

"But will not that disturb him?"

"Oh, no, monsieur, he is here to receive those who desire information."

"Well, lead the way."

He took me through corridors where old gentlemen were chatting, and finally led me into a beautiful office, somewhat somber, furnished throughout in black wood. A stout young man with a corporation was writing a letter as he smoked a cigar, the fragrance of which gave evidence of its quality.

He rose. We bowed to each other, and as soon as the footman had retired he asked:

"What can I do for you?"

"Monsieur," I replied, "pardon my curiosity. I had never seen this establishment. The few words inscribed on the façade filled me with astonishment, and I wanted to know what was going on here."

He smiled before replying, then said in a low tone with a complacent air:

"Mon Dieu, monsieur, we put to death in a cleanly and gentle—I do not venture to say agreeable—manner those persons who desire to die."

I did not feel very shocked, for it really seemed to me natural and right. What particularly surprised me was that on this planet, with its low, utilitarian, humanitarian ideals, selfish and coercive of all true freedom, any one should venture on a

similar enterprise, worthy of an emancipated humanity.

"How did you get the idea?" I asked.

"Monsieur," he replied, "the number of suicides increased so enormously during the five years succeeding the world exposition of 1889 that some measures were urgently needed. People killed themselves in the streets, at fêtes, in restaurants, at the theater, in railway carriages, at the receptions held by the President of the Republic, everywhere. It was not only a horrid sight for those who love life, as I do, but also a bad example for children. Hence it became necessary to centralize suicides."

"What caused this suicidal epidemic?"

"I do not know. The fact is, I believe, the world is growing old. People begin to see things clearly and they are getting disgruntled. It is the same to-day with destiny as with the government, we have found out what it is; people find that they are swindled in every direction, and they just get out of it all. When one discovers that Providence lies, cheats, robs, deceives human beings just as a plain Deputy deceives his constituents, one gets angry, and as one cannot nominate a fresh Providence every three months as we do with our privileged representatives, one just gets out of the whole thing, which is decidedly bad."

"Really!"

"Oh, as for me, I am not complaining."

"Will you inform me how you carry on this establishment?"

"With pleasure. You may become a member when you please. It is a club."

"A club!"

"Yes, monsieur, founded by the most eminent men in the country, by men of the highest intellect and brightest intelligence. And," he added, laughing heartily, "I swear to you that every one gets a great deal of enjoyment out of it."

"In this place?"

"Yes, in this place."

"You surprise me."

"Mon Dieu, they enjoy themselves because they have not that fear of death which is the great kill-joy in all our earthly pleasures."

"But why should they be members of this club if they do not kill themselves?"

"One may be a member of the club without being obliged for that reason to commit suicide."

"But then?"

"I will explain. In view of the enormous increase in suicides, and of the hideous spectacle they presented, a purely benevolent society was formed for the protection of those in despair, which placed at their disposal the facilities for a peaceful, painless, if not unforeseen death."

"Who can have authorized such an institution?"

"General Boulanger during his brief tenure of power. He could never refuse anything. However, that was the only good thing he did. Hence, a society was formed of clear-sighted, disillusioned skeptics who desired to erect in the heart of Paris a kind of temple dedicated to the contempt for death. This place was formerly a dreaded spot that no one ventured to approach. Then its founders, who met together here, gave a grand inaugural entertainment with Mmes. Sarah Bernhardt, Judic, Théo, Granier, and twenty others, and Mme. de Reske, Coquelin,

Mounet-Sully, Paulus, etc., present, followed by concerts, the comedies of Dumas, of Meilhac, Halévy and Sardon. We had only one thing to mar it, one drama by Becque which seemed sad, but which subsequently had a great success at the Comédie-Française. In fact all Paris came. The enterprise was launched."

"In the midst of the festivities! What a funereal joke!"

"Not at all. Death need not be sad, it should be a matter of indifference. We made death cheerful, crowned it with flowers, covered it with perfume, made it easy. One learns to aid others through example; one can see that it is nothing."

"I can well understand that they should come to the entertainments; but did they come to . . . Death?"

"Not at first; they were afraid."

"And later?"

"They came."

"Many of them?"

"In crowds. We have had more than forty in a day. One finds hardly any more drowned bodies in the Seine."

"Who was the first?"

"A club member."

"As a sacrifice to the cause?"

"I don't think so. A man who was sick of everything, a 'down and out' who had lost heavily at baccarat for three months."

"Indeed?"

"The second was an Englishman, an eccentric. We then advertised in the papers, we gave an account of our methods, we invented some attractive

instances. But the great impetus was given by poor people."

"How do you go to work?"

"Would you like to see? I can explain at the same time."

"Yes, indeed."

He took his hat, opened the door, allowed me to precede him, and we entered a card room, where men sat playing as they play in all gambling places. They were chatting cheerfully, eagerly. I have seldom seen such a jolly, lively, mirthful club.

As I seemed surprised, the secretary said:

"Oh, the establishment has an unheard of prestige. All the smart people all over the world belong to it so as to appear as though they held death in scorn. Then, once they get here, they feel obliged to be cheerful that they may not appear to be afraid. So they joke and laugh and talk flippantly, they are witty and they become so. At present it is certainly the most frequented and the most entertaining place in Paris. The women are even thinking of building an annex for themselves."

"And, in spite of all this, you have many suicides in the house?"

"As I said, about forty or fifty a day. Society people are rare, but poor devils abound. The middle class has also a large contingent.

"And how . . . do they do?"

"They are asphyxiated . . . very slowly."

"In what manner?"

"A gas of our own invention. We have the patent. On the other side of the building are the public entrances—three little doors opening on small streets. When a man or a woman present them-

selves they are interrogated. Then they are offered assistance, aid, protection. If a client accepts, inquiries are made; and sometimes we have saved their lives."

"Where do you get your money?"

"We have a great deal. There are a large number of shareholders. Besides it is fashionable to contribute to the establishment. The names of the donors are published in *Figaro*. Then the suicide of every rich man costs a thousand francs. And they look as if they were lying in state. It costs the poor nothing."

"How can you tell who is poor?"

"Oh, oh, monsieur, we can guess! And, besides, they must bring a certificate of indigency from the commissary of police of their district. If you knew how distressing it is to see them come in! I visited their part of our building once only, and I will never go again. The place itself is almost as good as this part, almost as luxurious and comfortable; but they themselves . . . they themselves!!! If you could see them arriving, the old men in rags coming to die; persons who have been dying of misery for months, picking up their food at the edges of the curbstone like dogs in the street; women in rags, emaciated, sick, paralyzed, incapable of making a living, who say to us after they have told us their story: 'You see that things cannot go on like that, as I cannot work any longer or earn anything.' I saw one woman of eighty-seven who had lost all her children and grandchildren, and who for the last six weeks had been sleeping out of doors. It made me ill to hear of it. Then we have so many different cases, without counting those who say noth-

ing, but simply ask: 'Where is it?' These are admitted at once and it is all over in a minute."

With a pang at my heart I repeated:

"And . . . where is it?"

"Here," and he opened a door, adding:

"Go in; this is the part specially reserved for club members, and the one least used. We have so far had only eleven annihilations here."

"Ah! You call that an . . . annihilation!"

"Yes, monsieur. Go in."

I hesitated. At length I went in. It was a wide corridor, a sort of greenhouse in which panes of glass of pale blue, tender pink and delicate green gave the poetic charm of landscapes to the inclosing walls. In this pretty salon there were divans, magnificent palms, flowers, especially roses of balmy fragrance, books on the tables, the *Revue des Deux-mondes*, cigars in government boxes, and, what surprised me, Vichy pastilles in a bonbonnière.

As I expressed my surprise, my guide said:

"Oh, they often come here to chat." He continued: "The public corridors are similar, but more simply furnished."

In reply to a question of mine, he pointed to a couch covered with creamy crêpe de Chine with white embroidery, beneath a large shrub of unknown variety at the foot of which was a circular bed of mignonette.

The secretary added in a lower tone:

"We change the flower and the perfume at will, for our gas, which is quite imperceptible, gives death the fragrance of the suicide's favorite flower. It is volatilized with essences. Would you like to inhale it for a second?"

"No, thank you," I said hastily, "not yet. . . ."

He began to laugh.

"Oh, monsieur, there is no danger. I have tried it myself several times."

I was afraid he would think me a coward, and I said:

"Well, I'll try it."

"Stretch yourself out on the 'endormeuse.'"

A little uneasy I seated myself on the low couch covered with crêpe de Chine and stretched myself full length, and was at once bathed in a delicious odor of mignonette. I opened my mouth in order to breathe it in, for my mind had already become stupefied and forgetful of the past and was a prey, in the first stages of asphyxia, to the enchanting intoxication of a destroying and magic opium.

Some one shook me by the arm.

"Oh, oh, monsieur," said the secretary, laughing, "it looks to me as if you were almost caught."

But a voice, a real voice, and no longer a dream voice, greeted me with the peasant intonation:

"Good morning, m'sieu. How goes it?"

My dream was over. I saw the Seine distinctly in the sunlight, and, coming along a path, the garde champêtre of the district, who with his right hand touched his kepi braided in silver. I replied:

"Good morning, Marinel. Where are you going?"

"I am going to look at a drowned man whom they fished up near the Morillons. Another who has thrown himself into the soup. He even took off his trousers in order to tie his legs together with them."

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